STARS STRIPES.

Report: McGwire's name came up often in steroids probe

Cardinals' Mark

Doctor seeks U.S. care for ailing Iraqi boy



Williams lets loose in new animated film

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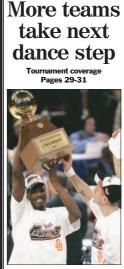
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Monday, March 14, 2005

Two U.S. contractors killed by roadside bomb in Hillah

U.S. soldier gunned down in Mosul attack Page 3





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e ws Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Prison guard hostage trial: An in-mate charged with taking an Arizona prison guard hostage for 15 days plans lefend himself in his trial beginning Monand says he will have the woman he is accused of raping "in shreds" when he questions her on the stand.

Jury selection begins this week for Ricky Wassenaar's trial in the longest U.S. prison hostage situation in decades. Acting as his own attorney will allow Wassenaar, 41, to directly question the woman he allegedly took hostage and raped.

Wassenaar and another inmate, Steven Coy, are accused of taking two guards hos tage at the Arizona State Prison Com-plex-Lewis in Buckeye on Jan. 18, 2004. They released one of the guards after a week but held the female guard until prison officials resolved the standoff by agreeing to transfer the inmates to prisons in other

Boeing CEO fired: The wife of ousted Boeing CEO Harry Stonecipher has filed for divorce, less than a week after the aerospace company's board forced him out for improper conduct related to an affair with a female executive.

Joan Stonecipher, 68, cited "irreconcil-able differences" in papers filed Friday in Cook County, Ill., Circuit Court. The filing comes just a month after the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. She listed her occupation as housewife and demanded a "fair and reasonable sum" from her husband, who she described as having "substantial income and wealth.

Business

Tyco cleanup: For Edward Breen, the head of scandal-plagued Tyco International, turning the Concord, N.H., company around required some serious house-cleaning. "Out of 450 people in our corporate office,

442 are new since I got there," said Breen, who took over in 2002. He even persuaded the board of directors

the very people who had hired him - to

Two and a half years after taking the helm of a company besieged by scandal and debt, Breen, 48, has bragging rights that include a 33-nercent increase in earnings

War on terrorism

French journalist: French authorities have received increasing contacts and information about a French journalist taken hos-tage in Iraq, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said Sunday.

Raffarin said the stepped-up communica-tions offered cautious hope that Liberation newspaper reporter Florence Aubenas and Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, her Iraqi interpreter, could be freed.

Turkish detainee: The U.S. lawyer for a Turkish man who has been held at the Guan-tanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba said Sunday that Turkish officials have told his client's family he would be freed.

Attorney Baher Azmy said that Turkish military officials called the mother of Murat Kurnaz on Saturday and informed her that her son was being flown to a U.S. military base in Turkey.

The news comes days after Azmy told reporters in Germany, where Kurnaz was born, that his client said he had been abused while in Guantanamo

World

West Bank settlements: Israel's Cabinet affirmed Sunday that it will dismantle 24 illegal West Bank settlement outposts, but did not give a deadline, and evaded decision on the fate of 81 more outposts, participants



Funeral for Chicago judge's mother: Susan Lawrence, right, a friend of the U.S. District Judge Joan Lewkow's family, grieves outside Saturday's memorial service for Donna Humphrey, Lefkow's mother, in Littleton, Colo. Humphrey was found shot execution style, along with Lefkow's husband, Michael, Feb. 28 in the basement of Lefkow's Chicago home, Although Bart Ross, the man responsibile for the slayings, committed suicide on Wednesday, at least a dozen U.S. marshals were stationed around the church.Last September, Lefkow dismissed a wsuit in which Ross blamed doctors for a medical procedure allegedly gone awry.

During their weekly meeting, ministers were briefed on an official report that said successive governments helped build and expand 105 outposts over the past decade. The Cabinet adopted the report, including recommendations that new laws be passed to make it easier to dismantle outposts in the future

Pakistan rape victim: A journalist in eastern Pakistan said Sunday that he will propose marriage to a rape victim who attract-

ed international media attention after she went public with her or-

> Rana Mohammed Arshad, 30, who works for Lahore-based

Urdu-language newspa-per, said that in keeping with local tradi-tions he, his mother and one of his brothers will travel to Mukhtar Mai's village to pro-pose to her.

Mai drew international attention when she spoke about her rape in 2002 by several men in Meerwala, Pakistan. She was or dered raped by a council of village elders after her brother was accused of having sex with another woman

Tajikistan vote: Tajik voters went to the polls Sunday to fill three parliamentary seats still vacant after last month's elections.

The first round of voting in the ex-Soviet republic was criticized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as falling short of democratic standards. It said authorities largely controlled the campaign and interfered with independent media

Chechen warlord killed: Security forces hunting down insurgents in Chechnya killed a rebel warlord Sunday, officials said. Kantash Mansarov, whom the authorities

described as the coordinator of rebel undercover operations in the Chechen capital, Grozny, was reportedly killed while resisting arrest.

Mansarov had an assault rifle seized from a local policeman who had been killed by militants, Akhmed Dakayev, deputy interior minister in Chechnya's Moscow-backed administration told Russia's state Rossiva tele-

Serbian war crimes suspect: Serbia's gov-ernment announced Sunday that another Serb suspect, a paramilitary leader accused of atrocities against Muslims during the Bosnian war, will surrender to the United Nations war crimes tribunal.

Gojko Jankovic, indicted by the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia, has decided to give himself up after being on the run for more than five years, the authorities in Belgrade said.

Kyrgyzstan runoff election: Voters in Kyrgyzstan cast ballots on Sunday for parliamentary runoff elections amid a brewing controversy over whether the Central Asian country's longtime leader might seek to extend his rule beyond constitutional limits.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said the first round of voting for the 75-member parliament fell short of international standards, noting instances of vote buying, questionable disqualification of candidates and interference with the media. The government has dismissed those charg-

Afghanistan plane crash: Afghan authorities have completed their search for the bodies of more than 100 people who died last month when an airliner slammed into a mountain during a snowstorm, an official said Sunday.

Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammed

Zahir Azimi also said the final death toll from the Feb. 3 crash could also rise to 106 two more than originally announced because one or two small children were also feared among the passengers.

Nepal attacks: Nepal's communist insur-gents on Sunday threatened to step up attacks on government security forces and said they would stage road blockades and strikes across Nepal.

The elusive rebel leader Prachanda said the rebels would also follow up the regional blockades and protests with a 10-day nationwide strike beginning April 1. Prachanda, whose real name is Pushpa Kamal Dahal. said the action was called to protest King Gyanendra's Feb. 1 decision to impose emer-gency rule, suspending most civil liberties.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Two U.S. contractors killed in Hillah bombing

GI gunned down in Mosul attack; Kurds, Shiites near completion on power-sharing deal

BY TODD PITMAN

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Two American security contractors were killed and a third wounded by a roadside bomb south of the Iraqicapital on Sunday while Kurdish leadiness said they were nearing completion on a deal with the dominant Shife-led allicance on forming a coalition government at this week's National Assembly.

The three contractors were working for Blackwater Security, a North Carolina-based contracting firm that provides security for U.S. State Department officials in Iraq. They were attacked Saturday on the main road to Hillah, south of Baghdad, U.S. Embassy spokesman Bob Callahan said.

A U.S. soldier also was gunned down late Saturday in a small arms fire attack in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the U.S. command said Sunday.

Foreign contractors, too, are often targeted by anti-U.S. guerrillas. At least 23 American civilian security and reconstruction contractors were killed in Iraq up to the end of 2004, according to the Washington-based Brookings Institution.

The State Department said it was "deeply saddened" by the deaths of the two contractors and the wounding of another.

"These men were assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Iraq to protect American diplomats. They played a vital role in our mission to bring democracy, and opportunity to the people of Iraq," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said in a statement.



Iraqi tribal leaders attend a conference on regional federalism Sunday in Baghdad. In political developments, the country's main Shiite and Kurdish coalitions were putting the finishing touches on an agreement they hope to sign on Monday forming a coalition government, in advance of the National Assembly convening on Wednesday.

The Blackwater employees were in the last vehicle in a four-vehicle corroy and were traveling to Hillah from Baghdad, Callahan said. A foreign security official said they were in a black Chevrolet Suburban. The road south traverses an area known as the "Triangle of Death" because of the frequency of insurgent attacks.

Blackwater said the contractors, who were not identified, were attacked on a highway just southeast of Baghdad's airport. The company said the wounded employee's injuries were not life-threatening.

In March 2004, four Blackwater employ-

ees were killed in the turbulent city of Fallujah, and two of the corpses were hung from a bridge, triggering a bloody three-week siege of the restive Sunni Muslim city west of Baehdad soon afterward.

Two Iraqis also were killed and five wounded Sunday when a roadside bomb missed a U.S. convoy in al-Obeidi in southeastern Baghdad, said Dr. Ali Karim of Kindi hospital, where the casualties were brought.

In the north, Kurdish leaders said they would go ahead with a deal they made with the Shiite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance

last week to help form a coalition government when the 275-member National Assembly convenes on Wednesday.

The Kurds won 75 seats in the Assembly during Jan. 30 elections.

The alliance won 140 seats and needs Kurdish support to assemble the two-thirds majority to elect a president, who will then give a mandate to the prime

"Talks between us did not fail. Both delegations went back to review the negotiations," said Fuad Masoum, a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Interim Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh, a Kurd, said the two sides were very close to reaching a comprehensive agreement, including the makeup of the coalimeter, including the makeup of the coalimeter of the provent and denied reports that their power-sharing deal had collapsed.

"The Kurdish side will fully cooperate to reach a comprehensive agreement that will guarantee a national unity government for Iraq up to handling the upcoming challenges." Saleh said.

"There are some details that have to be determined soon and there are some loose ends regarding some details but at the same time, there are many principles that were agreed upon," he added.

Interim Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd, said a Kurdish delegation was to meet with the alliance.

"We are going to Baghdad to continue discussion, we are very close to a final agreement. The meeting of the assembly on the 16th will take place as planned and there's no changes," he said.

Reports: U.S. informed about rescue at last minute

The Associated Press

ROME — American officials in Iraq were told that an Italian intelligence officer was there to free a hostage — but only at the very last minute, shortly before U.S. troops opened fire on their vehicle, killing the officer and wounding the woman, Italian media reported Sunday.

Several Italian dailies cited a neport now in the hands of Rome prosecutors by Maj. Gen. Mariol Marioli, an Italian who is the coalition forces' second-in-command. In it, Marioli said U.S. authorities were aware that the agent, Nicola Calipari, and another officer were in Iraq, but only he knew why. He said Calipari had told him not to tell the Americans they were there to collect a hostage.

Italian media have speculated that the reason for not telling the Americans was due to U.S. opposition to Italy's policy of negotiating with kidnappers.

However, Marioli also said that he finally told an American officer with him at the Baghdad airport — a certain "Capt. Green" after getting a call that the mission had been a success and that the two agents and freed journalist Gitlliana Sgrena were on their way back, according to dailies Corriere della Sera, Il Messaggero and La Stampa.

Calipari was killed March 4

Families defend GIs' actions in shooting

tary said that the vehicle carrying

the Italians was speeding and re-

fused to stop, and that a U.S. pa-

trol tried to warn the driver with

hand and arm signals, by flashing

white lights and firing shots in

front of the car and into the car's

Italy has said the shooting was

an accident, but has also disputed

parts of the account given by the

engine block.

Americans

By CRAIG GORDON

WASHINGTON — Families of a New York Army National Guard unit are defending its actions in the checkpoint shooting of an Italian journalist and intelligence officer, with one nervous father saying his son told him "anybody in that unit would have done the same thing."
"Nobody takes any chances," said William Bam-

"Nobody takes any chances," said William Bambino of Wantagh, N.Y., who spoke to his son, Pfc. Phillip Bambino, two days after the March 4 checkpoint shooting, though his son wasn't involved. "If somebody doesn't heed a warning, they don't give them a second chance. A second chance is too

Pfc. Bambino is part of Manhattan's 69th Infantry Regiment of the 42nd Infantry Division, which was on duty when a car carrying a freed Italian journalist and her rescuer came upon a U.S. military checkpoint on Baghdad's notorious airport road.

U.S. soldiers say they gave a series of warnings but fired when the speeding car didn't stop, wounding the journalist and killing an Italian intelligence

when U.S. troops fired on the vehi-

cle carrying him and the other

two Italians at a checkpoint about

It is not clear how much time

went by between the time when

Marioli told the Americans about

the mission and the shooting, or

whether the tragedy could have

been avoided if U.S. authorities

After the shooting, the U.S. mili-

766 yards from the airport.

had been better informed.

agent. The Italian government charges that the soldiers opened fire without warning and that the car was traveling at moderate speed. The Bush admin-

istration has pledged a full investigation.

As word of the shooting has filtered home in
media reports, some families of the "Fighting
öth" say the troops are nervous. Some worry that
a witch-hunt mentality could arise in the probe
due to Italian calls for answers, even as the troops
tell of the intense pressures and split-second decision-making needed to guard a route targeted by

Just two days before the shooting, the 69th had lost two soldiers from Queens in a roadside bomb attack. They are among more than a dozen members of the First Battalion, 69th Regiment that have died in combat since arriving in October.

"They're all on edge," William Bambino said of his son, 23, and his fellow soldiers. Anti-U.S. attacks are "an everyday occurrence."

Some families worry it will be harder for soldiers to do their jobs for fear of being second-guessed. Already, human rights groups have stepped up criticism that U.S. checkpoint guards are too quick to shoot amid this and other recent friendly-fire slavings.

> Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said the car was traveling slowly at night and stopped immediately when a light was flashed at a checkpoint, before U.S. troops fired on the car.

Sgrena has said that no light was flashed at the vehicle and that no warning shots were fired.

The U.S.-led coalition in Iraq has ordered an investigation into the shooting, with Italian officials' participation.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Saturday, at least 1,513 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,153 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 20; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 17; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, eight; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,375 U.S. military members have died, according to APs count. That includes at least 1,044 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's num-

The latest deaths reported by the military:

by the military:
■ No deaths reported.
The latest identifications re-

ported by the military:

No identifications report-

Afghan baby is a special delivery

U.S. soldiers help mother give birth on Black Hawk en route to base

Stars and Strings

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan - The population of Afghanistan grew slightly Satur-day, thanks in part to a pair of Black Hawk crews and a 25-year-old flight medic from

Wiesbaden, Germany.

Army Spc. Kyle Storbakken helped an Afghan mother deliver a healthy 6½-pound baby while aboard the Black Hawk flying to the U.S. military base Salerno.

"This was my first delivery," Storbakken said via a phone interview from Salerno, a remote base a few hours away by helicopter from Bagram

It was the first such delivery that anyone associated with the current med country had knowledge of. Col. John Giddens, the commander of the 249th General Hospital at Bagram, said most Afghans the hospital sees are those critically injured by mines, acci-dents or attacks by anti-coalition forces.

"It's very nice to have a joyful emergency coming through our doors," he said.

Peer Mullah Khan, the baby's father, is a leader of the village next to the U.S. outpost at Skhin. Through a translator, he said he came to U.S. troops for help when his wife started struggling during labor.

Giving birth isn't a new experience for his wife, Melawa. The baby girl, who hasn't been named yet, is the couple's 14th child. Two have died, but the others - ranging from the newest addition to a 19-year old girl - make for a large family. Two sons currently serve in

the Afghan army.

American officials said they agreed to take the mother and father aboard the aircraft because it appeared that the placenta was be tween the baby and the birth canal, potentially putting both lives at risk. Fortunately, that turned out to not be the case

In order to save time, one helicopter was disnatched from Salerno to Skhin to nick up the mother while another left Bagram to fly to Salerno. While the first helicopter was on its way back from the village to Salerno, the mother gave birth

Storbakken, assigned to the 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) at Wiesbaden, said he couldn't recall any specific emotions he had while helping deliver the baby.

"I guess you don't really think about what's going on until it's all over," he said. Capt. Richard Mangini, the executive offic-er of the 68th Medical Company, of which Storbakken is a part, said in-air births are a rarity. And it was even more special because o was delivering the baby

"He's our youngest and probably most inexnerienced medic in terms of time on the job he said.

Storbakken said he's already received several good-natured jabs by his peers.

"Some of the guys have been calling me daddy," he said.

The real father and mother were expected to travel back to Salerno from Bagram on Monday with the newest member of their fam-

E-mail Kent Harris at: harrisk@mail.estripes.osd.mil

Army doctor seeks stateside care for 3-year-old Iraqi boy

BY CHARLIE COON Stars and Stripes

BAQOUBA, Iraq — Abbasi isn't like most 3-year-old boys.

He hardly ever smiles or talks Abbasi often runs a fever of 106 degrees, and when he lays down on his back, the outline of his swollen spleen can be seen pushing through his stomach.

"I was with him the one time he smiled," said Spc. Penney Gainer. "It was my happiest moment since he has been here."

Qais Abbas, better known as Abbasi, is suffering from something that can't be pinpointed by

tors in Baqouba or American ones at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

the Iraqi doc-

So Dr (Capt.) Matthew I Carter, a pediatri-



Aid Station, is pulling strings to have Abbasi flown for treatment to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Abbasi, the son of a coalition-friendly tribal sheik, or village leader, is thought to be suffering from leukemia or another disease that has caused his spleen and liver to swell and his blood counts to be dangerously low.

Abassi's enlarged spleen gives his lungs less room to work, Carter said, making the boy work a little harder for every breath he takes

Transporting Abbasi to the states for diagnosis and treatment has to be justified to the State Department or Defense Department

'We don't want to advertise that we can help every kid in town," he said. Doing so, Carter said, would undercut the Iraqis' own medical providers "But this is a very sick kid, and

we care." he added.

Carter said he hoped a decision would be made within a week or

The Teal clinic is part of Company C, 203rd Forward Support Battalion, part of the 42nd Infantry Division's Task Force Liberty Its Level 2 care capabilities enable the staff to treat everyday



It has onerating trauma rooms. In its first

three weeks of operation, the staff treated

392 patients, including 112 Iraqis. Some of the staff have adopted Abbasi as one of their own. Gainer, of Cary, Ill., cradles Abbasi during the night shift, while Spc. Joy Maine of Snohomish, Wash., handles the day care.

"The first time I saw him I felt really bad because he looked really sick," Maine said. "Sometimes I'll take him outside for fresh air to get him out of his bed."

On Thursday the staff threw a little party for Abbasi, his third birthday. His gifts included a big. red stuffed bear, some clothes and other goodies

Col. Steven Salazar, command-



Dr. (Capt.) Matthew J. Carter holds Qais Abbas, better known as Abbasi, Carter, a pediatrician at the Capt, John Teal Medical Aid Station at Forward Operating Base Warhorse in Baqouba, Iraq, is trying to get approval for Abbasi to be flown to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., for diagnosis of an undetermined medical condition.

er of the Warhorse-based 3rd Brigade Combat Team, said the request to transport Abbasi to Washington for treatment was a good use of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

"With all the dollars going into the overall fight, the dollars spent to take care of this boy is less than a drop in the bucket," Salazar said. "But it means a lot to the boy and a lot to a lot of people in (the province of) Diyala

Abbasi is one of 22 children of

Sheik Ahmed Abdun al-Ahmeri of Bani Saad, located between Baghdad and Bagouba. He said he feels his son is part of his own body and is ready to do anything to make him feel better.

"I trust in God first," said Abdun. a Shiite, through a translator "And then I trust the American physicians to help my son be better.

F-mail Charlie Coon at:

Iraqi training ends

VIENNA, Austria - Ten diplomats from Iraq have finished Austria-sponsored diplomatic training that taught them about human rights, negotiation tactics and business skills.

The eight men and two women began the course in January at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, the Austria Press Agency reported Sunday

All said they needed the

"We were isolated for 13 years. We have a few things to 30-year-old catch up on." Maath al-Samari, one of the course participants, was quoted as saying.

All were aware of the risks they face as they return to Iraq, where government employees often are targeted by insurgents.

"We're potential targets," al-Samari was quoted as saying.

Equipment missing

NEW YORK - Looters systematically stole large amounts of equipment capable of making parts for nuclear arms in the weeks following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that ousted Saddam Hussein, a senior Iraqi official has told The New York Times.

Sami al-Araji, the deputy minister of industry, told the newspaper the operation appeared highly organized and that it had targeted certain plants in search of significant equipment.

'They came in with the cranes and the lorries, and they depleted the whole sites.'

"They knew what they were doing; they knew what they want. This was sophisticated

Araji told The Times equipment capable of making parts for missiles as well as chemi-cal, biological and nuclear arms was missing from eight or 10 sites that were the heart of Iraq's dormant program on unconventional weapons.

Debt relief discussed

BAGHDAD - Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has met with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and discussions focused on Iraq's debt, the government said.

The announcement Satur-day did not say where or when the two men met, but a man who answered the telephone in Allawi's office on Sunday said "it was in a Gulf state He would not give his name.

Schroeder visited seven Gulf states in weeklong tour that took him to seven countries, making him the first German chancellor to visit Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Yemen. He wrapped up the visit with a March 5 stop in the United Arab Emirates.

The announcement issued by Allawi's spokesman on Saturday, said the two "discussed future close ties and relations between Germany and Iraq."

In Berlin, government offi-cials refused to comment.

From The Associated Press

Rights group: Abuses by U.S. date back to '02

BY VERENA DOBNIK The Associated Press

NEW YORK - Unreleased U.S. Army reports detailing the beating deaths of two Afghan men at the hands of American soldiers show that military prison abuses began in Afghanistan in 2002, and were part of a systemat-ic pattern of mistreatment, a human rights representative said

More than two dozen American soldiers face possible criminal prosecution — and one already is charged with manslaughter — in the deaths at the main U.S. detention facility in Bagram, just north

of the Afghan capital of Kabul. As documented by the Army's Criminal Investigation Command, the men died a year before the photographed horrors at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, according to John Sifton, the Afghanistan researcher for the New York-based Human Rights Watch

In a phone interview, Sifton said his group had obtained 20 pages of electronically scanned Army reports.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued to obtain the case files under the Freedom of Information Act, but the Army with-held portions of the records because of an ongoing investigation and possible charges.

On Saturday, a Pentagon spokesman, Lt. Col. Jeremy Martin, would say only that the cases from 2002 "were thoroughly investigated and people were punished appropriately

"The Bush Administration and the Pentagon describe the abuse problems as isolated incidents, not systematic, not part of a plan. he evidence shows otherwise." Sifton said. "Far from being isolated incidents, these beatings were part of a pattern of abuse

Members of the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion who set up intelligence operations at the Bagram facility did the same at the Abu Ghraib prison.

The two Afghan detainees died in December 2002 - a week apart - as reported in Army memos, with updates detailing their fate after they were can tured by Afghan forces and handed to the U.S. military.

There were several other deaths of Afghans in American custody before December 2002, Sifton said, "and we want more information.

"It's amazing," he said. "Nobody has been punished for this. "The command has recommended that 28 people be prosecuted for this, but only two have

been charged so far."
The unreleased Army documents detail U.S. military investigations of the deaths of a man named Mullah Habibullah, about 30, and another identified only as Dilawar, a 22-year-old taxi driver with a 2-year-old daughter, according to Sifton.

The Army has publicly acknowledged the two deaths and announced in October that up to 28 U.S. soldiers face possible charges in connection with what ware ruled homicides

U.S. ready to face criticism of prison abuses in Middle East

U.N. rights meeting

to begin, Page 8

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The annual meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission opens on Monday in Geneva with the United States prepared to confront critics ready to highlight the abuses by U.S. military personnel of Iraqi, Afghan and other prisoners. In previous

United States has been free the rights shortcomings

of other countries at commission meetings.

But continuing disclosures about prisoner mistreatment dating back to last spring have required the administration to adopt a defensive strategy for the coming six-week conclav

As part of a damage control plan, U.S. delegates have devised a pro-active approach for the meeting. They will point to American efforts to hold accountable those responsible for behavior that the administration acknowl-

edges has been reprehensible, U.S. officials say.

The scandals have triggered a spate of investigations and some low-level personnel have been punished. But thus far, senior military officers and civilian Pentagon officials have escaped blame Earlier this year, Cuba and Zimbabwe served on a five-nation working

group signed to set part of the agenda this year's meeting.

Cuba tried to get fellow working group members to get the U.S. prisoner abuse scandal on the agenda but the effort fell short by a 3-1 vote, with Zimbabwe abstaining. This, however, will not prevent that issue from being aired during the commission's deliberations.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque raised the possibili-ty last week that Cuba will introduce a resolution at the commiscondemning the United States for prisoner mistreatment.



Johnny Spann, father of slain CIA officer Mike Spann, pauses at his son's gravesite at Arlington National Ceme

Slain CIA agent's father hunts for answers about son's death

By JEFFREY MCMURRAY The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. - Johnny Spann stood in gently falling snow and wistfully recalled the day his son, CIA officer Johnny Micheal "Mike" Spann, lingered among the tombstones at Arlington National Cemetery, studying each inscription and testing his sister Tanva's patience.

"Mike, let's go," she implored. "They're all the "No, Tanya, they're not," the younger Spann re-

plied. "There are stories behind them It is Mike Spann's story that draws Johnny Spann

to Arlington now. There is no greater objective

for the grieving father these days than gathering the facts behind the uprising on Nov. 25, 2001, at the makeshift prison in Afghanistan where his son became the first American casualty of the Afghan war

Spann, a 56-year-old real tate company owner from Winfield. Ala., visited Mike Spann's grave last month for the third time in as many days. The elder Spann placed flowers and contemplated the chain of events that put his son in a na-

tional cemetery Upon returning to his rental car at the roadside, he wiped tears from his eyes.

"Even after four years, it doesn't get any easier," Spann said.

Articulate and folksy, with combed-back hair that is two shades of gray. Spann thumbs through a sheaf of documents and explains his son's last living moments with methodical calm. It is the same trait he displayed daily at the trial of John Walker Lindh. the American fighting alongside the Taliban Spann is conducting his own investigation into the

origins of the riot at the prison in Mazar-e-Sharif where suspected Taliban supporters were held. U.S. government agencies, Spann said, are not in-

clined to piece together the entire story

By investigating for himself, "No lies get told and nothing gets covered up," he said. "I've got more at but they have. I want to know."

During his visit to Washington, Spann shared with

The Associated Press a videotape that shows the two hours leading up to the fateful riot.

Spann contends the last two minutes of footage prove the uprising began with a planned grenade attack inside the prison building rather than a spontaneous scuffle outside where his son was interviewing prisoners, including Lindh.

The distinction could be critical in Lindh's quest to get clemency for his 20-year prison term. One of the most serious charges against Lindh was that the uprising was planned the night before, yet he did not warn Spann

At trial, Lindh claimed no knowledge of the riot plot. The judge seemed to agree. If there were evidence that Lindh was responsible for the younger Spann's death, the judge said, then a plea bargain would not have been accepted that spared Lindh

more serious charges, such as murder or treason. Spann's father is convinced that such evidence exists. He refers to Lindh as "hard core al-Qaida" and says if Lindh really wanted to help a fellow American, he would have snoken up that morning

Because he did not, Spann contends, Lindh was complicit in the younger Spann's death. Some day, the father is hoping to prove this legally, in an attempt to get Lindh's plea bargain thrown out.

An intelligence official, speaking on the condition

of anonymity, said the circumstances surrounding the incident at the prison were reviewed. The offi cial said some prisoners burst out of the building fir-ing weapons while Spann and a colleague were interviewing prisoners outside.

Spann said the doctors told him that his son charged toward the prison building - right into a trap — when the grenade went off

Later, Spann said, he reviewed autopsy reports that showed his son had two bullet wounds to the head. That indicates a method of death co

with an execution-style slaying, Spann said. 'That doesn't sound like two people in a fight get-

ting shot," Spann said. "That sounds like one guy is on his knees or something getting shot.'

Two Marines wounded

KABUL, Afghanistan - Militants armed with rockets and machine guns ambushed Marines patrolling in eastern Afghanistan, wounding two of the American troops, the military said Sunday.

The patrol came under attack on Saturday in an area north of

the city of Jalalabad and close to the Pakistani border, the U.S. military said. The assailants quickly retreated, it said.

The two injured Marines continued with their mission after treatment at the scene for shrapnel wounds

U.S. and Afghan government troops clash regularly with militants in southern and eastern Afghanistan, where Taliban-led rebels have maintained a stubborn insurgency since 2001.

While attacks have declined in recent months, Taliban officials have vowed to step up their cam-paign with the melt of the winter snow, despite high-profile peace overtures from U.S. commanders and Afghan leaders.

From The Associated Press

Daily-life therapy: Home ec for amputees

BY SUSAN LEVINE The Washington Post

WASHINGTON - The wheelchairs, crutches and still-healing bodies show up for lunch every Wednesday, crowding into a di-minutive kitchen where the washer and dryer sit cheek by jowl with the electric range, and the sink is wedged between the fridge and a small counter space.

No one seems to mind the con-gestion. Most grumble good-naturedly as they brown hamburger meat and pull cupcakes out of the

44 We have them

demonstrate.

not just to us

but to

themselves, that

these things are

possible.

Col. William Howard III

Chief of Walter Reed

Army Medical Center's

occupational therapy

oven sometimes bending or stir ring awkwardly if a missing limb has yet to be sup planted or an artificial limb is too new for real dex terity

In this thirdthe world at the Walter Recu Center in Washington, too many cooks is a wel come scenario The kitchen is

a regular stop for injured soldiers and Marines who come to Walter Reed during their long recovery after

serving in Iraq. It's part of a mock apartment that was dubbed Fort Independence when it opened nearly two years ago. Today, everybody just

calls it "the apartment."

Inside the ersatz front door are a sofa, TV, desk and computer, a recliner and dresser, a twin bed and bathroom. It's not so differhome, from despite the 13-foot width. But for those who have lost arms and legs, it's a safer place than home to start practicing what they soon must do on their own - from rolling out of bed to maneuvering between wheelchair and toilet, to running a load of laundry.

'We have them demonstrate, not just to us but to themselves, that these things are possible," said Col. William Howard III chief of the hospital's occupation-

al therapy program. For 90 minutes or so each Wednesday, the program in-

cludes cooking.
The kitchen therapy is seldom much of a tough sell. In contrast to the one-on-one nature of other rehabilitation, this duty provides an irreverent group with a camarade-

rie that is itself therapeutic. The head cook usually is Capt Katie Yancosek, a vivacious occupational therapist who takes as well as she gives with no consider-

"Everything

that was easy before is harder or takes a lot more time," she said. Or a lot more thought. shows soldiers who are missing hands or arms how best to craa mixing bowl, and she warns with lower-limb amputations never to bend over an open oven door.

program With nearly a dozen participants and onlookers Wednesday, Yancosek had a full house. The menu was soup, hot dogs, sandwiches and little meatballs doused in maple syrup.

Marine 1st Lt. Erasmo Valles, 29, had been drafted for noontime meatball duty. He once might have been adept at his outdoor grill, but that was before an antitank mine nearly destroyed his legs. His right leg now has a metal plate in the foot; the left leg ends

in the glint of a prosthesis.

Valles moved carefully at the sound of a timer going off, mitt on his left hand, crutch under his right arm. He slowly took a shal-low tray out of the oven and turned to put it on the table. Behind him, another soldier gently

closed the oven door with his foot. It was Valles' first time in the apartment kitchen, and it was a



THE WASHINGTON POST/I ATWE

Top: Sgt. Tim Gustafson, injured in Iraq, practices cooking and eating with his wife, Janice Gustafson, in a mock apartment at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. dubbed Fort Independence. Right: Pfc. Chase Savage and 1st Lt. Erasmo Valles work on cooking and baking in the apartment's

decided success. No meathalls hit the floor. Everyone proclaimed them delicious. And the most satisfied patron was the Marine's vear-old son, Lorenzo,

One by one. Valles fed his son meatballs. Lorenzo kept looking for more, until finally Valles put the little boy on his knee and began to bounce him

First on Daddy's real knee Then on his new one



Rumblings of discontent hinder new Iraqi government 44 Well, if they (the new assembly) cannot form a government, then

BY ALISSA J. RUBIN Los Angeles Times

BAGHDAD - With Iraqis increasing concerned about a security vacuum, the man who is expected to become the next prime minister on Saturday defended the winning parties' inability to form a government nearly six weeks after millions of people risked their lives to vote.

an interview, Ibrahim al-Jafaari, the nominee of the slate that won the most votes in the Jan 30 election, said it could take two more weeks to close a deal.

Behind the scenes, the two largest vote-getters, al-Jafaari's Shiite-dominated United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurds, are engaged in frantic negotiations. The in frantic negotiations. are meeting almost groups around the clock, and there has been constant maneuvering as the two try to find a position that

I think they are not qualified to manage the country's affairs. This vacuum of power increases the number of terrorist acts, it opens the way for the terrorists.

Mohammed Saddoun Shopkeeper in Baghdad

allows a compromise between them but also satisfies their respective constituencies

But ordinary Iraqis, frightened by two large suicide bombings this month that killed at least 200 people, are questioning why they braved insurgents' threats to cast their votes

Mohammed Saddoun, ashopkeeper, stood in front of his storefront grocery last week lamenting the slow progress by the newly elected National Assembly's in forming a government.

"I am not only frustrated - I am ready to burst with anger, Saddoun said. "We put our souls in the ... palms of our hands and went to the ballot centers.

"Well, if they (the new assembly) cannot form a government, then I think they are not qualified to manage the country's affairs. This vacuum of power increases the number of terrorist acts, it

opens the way for the terrorists." Throughout Baghdad, one of the most mixed cities in Iraq, there are rumblings of discontent and cynicism about the new government. even though many people here voted for one of the three parties that took the most votes - the United Iraqi Alliance; the Iraq party of interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi; or the Kurdish Party

The doubts are deeper among those who did not vote - supporters of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and many Sunni Muslims who feel they have been

left out of the political equation. At stake is the relative power of the different slates, control over

positions in the government, and policies on some of the most conus issues in Iraq, such as control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and the power of the provinces relative to the central government.

"The Kurds are making de-mands no one can grant and still keep the support of the Iraqi peo-nle." said Jaber Habib, a professor of political science at Baghdad University.

In the interview Saturday, al-Jafaari signaled that the alliance did not feel bound to adhere strictly to the transitional administrative law, known as the TAL.

The TAL has many positive sides ... but there are also many negative aspects to it ... or missing aspects of the TAL," al-Jafaari said. "Since we are coming to the new constitution, we are trying to bridge those gaps. But we can make use of the posi-tive parts of it."

Former foes meet again for Iwo Jima anniversary

U.S. and Japanese veterans pay tribute to those who died in battle 60 years ago

BY FRED ZIMMERMAN Stars and Strines

IWO JIMA, Japan en once determined to kill one another met again this weekend, but this time in peace at a ceremony

to pay tribute to warriors who never left this desolate island. More than 60

U.S. veterans of the Battle of Iwo Jima and a hand ful of their Jana. nese counterparts met at the Re-union of Honor monument on a

hill overlooking Yellow Beach, where many U.S. Marines landed on Feb. 19, 1945 - the first time during the war that U.S. ground forces set foot on Japanese soil

This year was the 60th anniversary of one of World War II's bloodiest battles. More than 100,000 U.S. troops fought to take the island, suffering more than 26,000 casualties including more than 6,800 deaths. Fewer than 1,000 of the 22,000 Japanese defenders survived.

Iwo Jima was strategically important to the U.S. bombing campaign of Japan. Once taken, fighter planes could be based there to escort bombers on missions returning

could land there, possibly saving their crews from crashing or ditching at sea. By the war's end, 2.251 B-29s with 24.761 crewmen made emergency landings on the island

During the ceremony, retired t. Gen. Larry Snowden, who Lt. Gen. fought on Iwo Jima, said the Japanese defenders fought to protect

to remember. 77

Gen. Michael Hagee

Marine Corps commandant

speaking at the Iwo Jima

memorial ceremonies

homeland 44 Our first duty is while the Marines "fought to bring the end of the war and go home

Snowden added that "hatred was the motivating force years but peace should - and that's what hap-

friendship pened in the years since."

Gen. Michael Hagee, Marine Corps commandant, said during the ceremony, "Our first duty is to remember.

In World War II's four years, Hagee said, 353 Medals of Honor were awarded - 27 of them from actions during the 36 days of fighting on Iwo Jima. He recalled Adm. Chester Nimitz's words in praising those who fought that battle, saying, "Uncommon valor



Members of the Japanese delegation pour water over the Reunion of Honor monument Saturday during the 60th anniversary commemoration



"Truly, memories of the tragic Battle of Iwo Jima have faded away through generations," Endo said. "Our responsibilities and du-ties are to dedicate the rest of our lives to passing our memories on to our next generations so that a tragic battle of this kind would

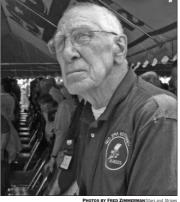
er be repeated. While all spoke of the tragedy of the battle, many also talked about the friendship that has been built since. Hagee said grandchildren of men who fought on the island as foes now stand together as allies in Iraq and elsewhere throughout the world

Former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori said the two countries are working together for world peace and security. "I believe that our cooperation is a great tribute to the spirits of Japanese and American soldiers who died on this island," said Mori, who said he learned much about peace by witnessing the veterans gather in friendship.

After the speeches, U.S. and Japanese officials placed wreaths at the foot of the monument. Japa-nese officials made the symbolic offering to the fallen of pouring water over the marker. Rifles cracked in a 21-gun salute. The assembly then observed a 30-second moment of silence; the only sounds were of the wind blowing the grass and distant waves pounding the black beach.

As have so many other such gatherings on the desolate Pacific island, the ceremony ended with the echoing of taps. E-mail Fred Zimmerman at: rimmermanf@pstripes.osd.mil

mandant until the end of the battle



Elmer Rome stands in silence as taps is played Saturday at the 60th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Iwo Jima on the island. As a Navy Seabee with the 133rd Naval Construction Battalion. Rome landed in the second wave on Iwo Jima. He called the black sand beach home for 17 days.

Seabee shares island memories with family

IWO JIMA Japan - On Saturday. Elmer Rome stood again on the black sand beach of Iwo Jima that he called home for 17 days in

Sixty years ago, he first set foot on the island as a young petty officer third class with the 133rd Naval Construction Battalion. The unit, attached to the 4th Marine Division, was in the second wave of troops to land on the is- just eight minutes after the first wave. Rome said they had to jump over the landing crafts' sides and wade to shore, but he doesn't remember the water being too deep.

"We were 1,014 guys who had no idea of what we were getting into." he said. "I saw all the ones that were killed or maimed lying there on the beach," Rome said. "I was never scared and never hurt ... I was too focused on my The U.S. forces were taking so

many casualties that every time he and his fellow Seabees ran supplies to the front, they returned carrying stretchers bearing the wounded. He said a photo of him carrying a stretcher was on a 1945 Look magazine cover

After living on the beach for 17

days, Rome said, the Seabees moved almost directly across the island, where they built water tanks at a desalination site. He also helped build some barracks near the site.
Rome had returned to Iwo

Jima just once, in 1995, when he brought a daughter to the com-memoration. This year, he brought all 10 of his children. Rome's children said that grow

ing up, they knew little of what their father did on Iwo Jima.

"He just wouldn't talk about it, said daughter Mary-Anne Osborne. "Until he came back for the 50th anniversary. Then he would talk about it occasionally. Son T.J. said he'd learned

things from his father this past week that he'd never heard before - such as how he went to the cemetery to visit the graves of seven friends who had died.

T.J. said the family was able to get their hands on some of his history. They found and purchased two copies of the Look magazine issue with him on the cover. "I think they paid about \$10," said the elder Rome.

T.J. replied, "It was a lot more than \$10, dad. But you don't need

to worry about how much it was.

- Fred Zimmerman

4 Fort Knox drill sergeants charged with abusing recruits

The Associated Press

FORT KNOX, Ky. - Four Army drill sergeants were charged Friday with abusing recruits who were allegedly slammed into lockers and pulled down a hallway by their ankles. The Army said the recruits also were pushed, slapped and kicked

The alleged abuse began when the re-cruits reported for duty Feb. 3 and ended

five days later, according to the Fort Knox public affairs office The drill sergeants were investigated

after their battalion commander received reports of abuse from soldiers in an adjacent harracks

Sgt. 1st Class David H. Price, 36; Sgt. 1st Class Ricky L. Stauffer, 35; Staff Sgt. Michael G. Rhoades, 33; and Staff Sgt.

Bryan G. Duncan, 26; were charged with maltreatment of soldiers and obstruction of justice. Price faces an additional charge of violation of a lawful regulation

Each is to have a special court-martial, but no court dates were immediately set. The maximum punishment is a year confinement, forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for a year, and a reduction to the

When reached by telephone, Stauffer declined to comment. Phone messages left for Price and Duncan were not immediately returned Friday, and a telephone number for Rhoades could not be located.

All were assigned to Company E, 1st Battalion, 81st Armor Regiment, part of Fort Knox's 1st Armor Training Brigade.

IN THE WORLD

Pope leaves Rome hospital

BY AIDAN LEWIS The Associated Press

ROME - With thousands cheering him on, Pope John Paul II returned to the Vatican on Sunday, two weeks after undergoing throat surgery to ease his breathing problems and hours after greeting pilgrims in a raspy voice that raised hopes he would fully

The 84-year-old pope crossed himself just before he left Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic hospital in a gray Mercedes minivan with tinted windows rather than in the glass-paneled popemobile he used after a previous hospitalization last month

Patients in robes ventured out onto their balconies to bid the pope farewell, and cries of "Viva il Papa!" ("Long live the pope!" were heard as the van made the trip back to the Holy See.

Earlier Sunday, the pope spoke just a few words to the faithful gathered beneath his 10th-floor hospital suite, waving and making the sign of the cross with a steady hand

"Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your visit," he said, reading from a sheet of paper. "To everyone, have a good Sunday and a good week

It was the first time since his Feb. 24 operation to insert a breathing tube in his windpipe that John Paul addressed the faithful in remarks carried live. In three previous appearances, the pope had remained silent.

The Vatican's brief statement announcing his release made clear that the none was not cured but was well enough to continue his recovery back at St. Peter's.

The Holy See had said last week that John Paul would be released in time for Holy Week celebrations, which begin on March 20 with Palm Sunday and culminate a week later with Easter.

The Holy See did not say whether the breathing tube had been removed or replaced with another type designed to make it easier for him to speak. Its next health update was expected on Monday.

The pope's speaking difficulties are complicated by Parkinson's disease, raising concerns over John Paul's ability to communicate and guide the world's 1 hillion Roman Catholics



Pope John Paul II waves Sunday as he arrives at the Vatican after leaving Gemelli Polyclinic hospital, in Rome. Seated behind him is Sister Luisa. The pontiff had been hospitalized with a breathing crisis.

S DEMOCRACY = NEGLECTING OTHERS S LEBANESE LIVITY = SEDITION? S RESISTING THE ENEMY TERRORISM WE DON'T WANT NEITHER YOUR DEMOCRACY NOR YOUR INTERVENTION

nunist supporter holds a poster addressed to President Bush during a demonstration Sunday against the Syrian withdrawal of troops

Dates of final Syrian troop withdrawal not scheduled

BY HUSSEIN DAKROUB The Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon - Syria has withdrawn nearly a third of its ficer said Sunday, but the Lebanese foreign minister said a date for a complete withdrawal would not be set until a meeting of the military leadership of the two countries that was scheduled for

Meanwhile, a pro-Syrian rally organized by Hezbollah drew at least 100,000 protesters in the southern market town of Nabativeh.

They burned Israeli flags and waved posters of Syrian Presi-dent Bashar Assad — the second such rally the militant Shiite Muslim group has sponsored in a

The senior Syrian officer said about 4.000 soldiers had crossed the border into Svria since the pullout began on Tuesday and the remaining 10,000 were in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley.

"Another 4,000 soldiers in Lebanon's central mountains have redeployed to the Bekaa region.

This is in addition to 6,000 troops already stationed in the Bekaa," the military official said on condition of anonymity. He said the fate of the 10,000

troops remaining in the Bekaa would be discussed by the April 7 military commission.

Lebanese Foreign Mahmoud Hammoud also said the joint military commission would set the "duration, time and location in these matters." Hammoud did not mention a specific date for the meeting, but the officer said it was to be held on April 7.

Hammoud made his remarks after meeting with U.N. envoy Terje Roed-Larsen in Beirut, a day after Roed-Larsen had visited Assad

President Bush, who repeatedly has called for a full Syrian with-drawal from Lebanon, wants Syria to move out before Lebanon's parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in April and May.

Asked if the final withdrawal could take place before the elections, Hammoud said it was up to the joint military commission to decide.

Some say U.N. rights commission needs reform to regain credibility

BY SAM CAGE The Associated Press

GENEVA - The U.N. Human Rights Commission must reform itself to restore its sinking credibility, say rights groups who accuse the worst-offending countries of using their membership in the agency to protect each other from condemnation.

"The commission has become a refuge for governments like Sudan, which should be in the dock rather than on the top U.N. rights body " said Kenneth Roth executive director of the New York-based Human Rights Watch

The U.N. commission — which starts its annual six-week session Monday Monday — must address long-standing problems, in particular that some of its 53 member states "routinely resort to double standards in addressing country situations." officials of Amnesty International said

Several possible changes have been suggested, including extending participation in the watchdog icy to all U.N. members, or ex cluding those with noor records of their own.

Under U.N. rules, members are picked by regional groups. Current member states that have been criticized for their records include China, Cuba, Nepal, Russia and Zimbabwe.

'The commission must focus on protecting human rights, instead of blocking criticism of members that commit serious rights abuses," Roth told reporters last week

A high-level U.N. panel has reported that the commission's ability to promote respect for human rights "has been undermined by eroding credibility.'

About half the commission's current members will attend this session "not to promote human rights, but to undermine them."

and this is reducing the credibility of the whole United Nations organization, Roth said.

"There is a question of whether the commission in its current form is a viable method of protect-ing human rights," Roth told re-

porters. The most important issue at this year's meeting is the threat to human rights posed by governanti-terror campaigns. Roth said

Campaigners called on the commission to condemn treatment of detainees by the United States and to ask that Washington give ndependent monitors acce terrorism suspects. Human Rights Watch is asking the commission to appoint a monitor with a three-year mandate to address

terror and counter-terror issues. Exclusion of evidence (obtained through torture) is another matter we hope the commission will give due attention to," Amnesty's Peter Splinter said.

Europeans probe CIA 'renditions

BY CRAIG WHITLOCK The Washington Post

MILAN, Italy - A radical Egyptian cleric known as Abu Omar was walking to a Milan mosque for noon prayers in Feb-ruary 2003 when he was grabbed on the sidewalk by two men, sprayed in the face with chemicals and stuffed into a van. He hasn't been seen since.

Milan investigators, annear to be close to identifying his kidnappers. Last month, officials showed up at Aviano Air Base in northern Italy and demanded records of any American planes that had flown into or out of the joint U.S.-Italian military installation around the time of the abduction. They also asked for logs of vehicles that had entered

Italian authorities suspect the Egyptian was the target of a CIA-sponsored operation known as rendition, in which terrorism suspects are forcibly taken for interrogation to countries where torture is practiced.

The Italian probe is one of three official investigations that have surfaced in the past year into renditions believed to have taken place in Western Europe. Although the CIA usually carries out the operations with the help or blessing of friendly local intelli gence agencies, law enforcement authorities in Italy, Germany and Sweden are examining whether U.S. agents might have broken local laws by detaining terrorist suspects on European soil and subjecting them to abuse or mal-

treatment.

The CIA has kept details of rendition cases a closely guarded secret, but has defended the controversial practice as an effective and legal way to prevent terrorism. Intelligence officials have testified that they have relied on the tactic with greater frequency since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

The Bush administration has received backing for renditions from governments that have been criticized for their human rights records, including Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan, where many of the suspects are taken for interrogation. But the administration is getting a much different recention in Europe, where lawmakers and prosecutors are questioning whether the practice is a blatant violation of local sovereignty and human rights.

Iran: Europe moving too slowly on nuclear talks

BY TAREK AL-ISSAWI The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran said Sunday its nuclear talks with Europe were moving too slowly, adding that it didn't

rule out negotiations with Washington as long as America recognizes Tehran's right to a peaceful nuclear program.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said a nermanent halt of Iran's nuclear activities was out of the

question but said it was not vet ready to declare the "complicated and difficult" talks with Europeans a failure.

"Talks with Europe have not met our satisfaction yet," Asefi told reporters. "The talks are taking longer than we expected."

Iranian officials have previously accused European negotiators of wasting time and not making proposals that conform to the Ira nian bottom line — that it will develop peaceful nuclear technolo-

gy.
The crux of the negotiations,

ropean approval for a nuclear program built with guarantees that the technology won't be diverted toward weapons

Washington insists Tehran's uranium enrichment program is 44 Talks with aimed at developing a bomb, not merely providing Europe have not met our an alternative en

ergy source.

"We are seeking nuclear weapons," Asefi said. "We an-nounce uet. 77 Hamid Reza Asefi nounce again that Iran Foreign Ministry

spokesman

satisfaction

nuclear weapons have no place in our defense and security doctrine Talks between Iran and Britain, Germany and France, who negotiate on behalf of the European Union, ended without result last

week. The two sides have agreed to meet again March 23 Asefi said Iran might agree to direct negotiations with the United States if Washington acknowledged Tehran's right to develop nuclear technology. Otherwise,

U.S. entry into the negotiations would likely cause them to fail. On Saturday, Asefi rejected Tehran to drop its nuclear ambi-

mild concessions. nounced earlier by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, include dropping opposition to Iran's application for membership in the World Trade Organiza tion and allowing the sale of some spare parts for civilian aircraft.

National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley insisted the United States is not offering concessions to Iran or engaging the regime that President Bush has described as "the world's primary state sponsor of terror.

"What we are doing is removing some objections to something the Europeans are doing," Hadley said on "Fox News Sunday "But I do not think that the Iranian regime can take much comfort in this because as part of this arrangement, the Europeans now for the first time are talking about Iranian support to terror and the need for this Iranian regime to listen to their people and to give them a greater role in the political process

Asefi said Rice's offer amount ed to nothing in the way of a concession. Iran, he said, is not afraid of being referred to the Security



An Albanian man, joined by his family, looks at the ballot paper Sunday during Macedonia's municipal elections in the village of Zaiaz. Fights broke out at four polling stations, causing voting to be postponed.

Fights at polls delay Macedonian voting

The Associated Press

SKOPJE. Macedonia - Scuffles between election workers shut down at least three Macedonian polling stations Sunday as voters cast ballots in municipal elections - the first held under reforms intended to help the ethnically tense republic forge closer ties with Europe.

Election Commission spokesman Zoran Tanevski said fights broke out at four stations, one near the capital, Skopje, and three in other parts of the country. One of them remained open, he said,

but he did not specify which one. He described the incidents as minor and said voting in the three districts affected by the closures would be postponed until March 27. He said no problems were reported at the other nearly 3,000

polling stations nationwide International observers are in the former Yugoslav republic to monitor the poll to elect local government officials in new municinalities created following an ethnic Albanian rebel insurgency

four years ago. An internationally brokered cease-fire paved the way for the

reforms. Ethnic Albanians, demanding minority-rights guarantees from

paign marred by corruption allegations from both sides. But Macedonia's elections are as much about low living stan-

dards as they are about resolving ethnic divisions.

the majority Macedonian Slavs,

will gain greater autonomy under

the reformed local government

system with expanded control

over schools, law enforcement

Macedonia and all of us is to have

peaceful, fair and democratic elec-

tions today." President Branko Cr-

venkovski said after voting near

ward toward our strategic goal, a

Nearly 400 candidates from doz-

ens of political parties are partici-

pating in mayoral races in 85 mu-

Two-term Skopje Mayor Risto Penov, a 47-year-old Liberal-Dem-

ocrat, is facing a challenge from

opposition-backed businessman Trifun Kostovski, 58, in a cam-

nicipalities, including Skopje.

"This will be a hig sten for-

"The most important thing for

and taxation.

the capital, Skopje.

place in Europe.'

"The vast majority of people here see these elections as a test of the nation's democratic maturi ty," Pande Lazarevski, director of the Macedonian Institute for Social, Science and Political Re-searches, said.

Rice entering diplomatic fray to lure N. Korea back to talks

BY BUDT HEDMAN The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea - Condoleezza Rice is the latest entrant in a flurry of Asian diplomacy aimed at luring North Korea back to distalks, with two-year-old crisis at a new high since the North claimed last month it has nuclear weapons and would boycott the deadlocked talks.

The U.S. secretary of state's trip starting Monday to China, Japan and South Korea is her first to the region since taking the top snot at the State Department, and is to "review with our partners our diplomatic efforts to convene the next round of six-party talks," spokesman Richard Boucher said

Since the North claimed on Feb 10 that it has nuclear weapons and would stay away from the nuclear

involved in the talks Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States - have sent envoys scurrying across the conti-

But break throughs and bold propos

als have been scarce. as evidence proving the North really has nuclear bombs

It

was Rice's comment during her confirma

grouping North tion hearings. Korea among the world's "out-posts of tyranny," that the North seized on as a reason for shunning the nuclear talks. The North has also taken President Rush's sween. ing rhetoric on spreading freedom around the world as tacitly aimed at the overthrow of Kim Jong Il's regime

And North Korea is sure to scrutinize the Bush administration's recent nomination of one of the North's most outspoken critics top arms control official John Bolton - as its ambassador to the United Nations

North Korea might worry that Bolton will press the U.N. Security Council for sanctions against the North, said Peter Beck, Seoulbased director of the North East Asia Project for the International Crisis Group think tank.

The North has hinted at possible compromises. Kim Jong Il told a visiting Chinese diplomat his country would return to the talks if the United States shows "trustworthy

Germany wants to reduce its EU contributions

FRANKFURT, Germany — German Finance Minister Hans Eichel said in an interview released Sunday that he wants to reduce his nation's contributions to the European Union, citing the burden of paying for Germany's reunification.

eaking to Focus weekly ahead of next week's EU finance ministers' meeting on the 2007-2013 budget, Eichel said that no country should have to contribute more than 1 percent of its gross national income to Brussels. Germany is currently the third largest contributor to the EU.



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China testing AIDS vaccine on humans

BEIJING - China has begun conducting the first stage of testing of a new AIDS vaccine on eight volunteers, the government said.

The testing began Saturday, when the volunteers received physical checkups and signed waivers, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

A total of 49 volunteers between the ages of 18 and 50 will be part of the tests, to take place in three stages, said Xinhua, citing Chen Jie, director of the disease control agency in southern China's Guangxi region.

said. It didn't say what the stage was meant to test, but said the second would cover the "immune nature and safety of the vaccine."

The agency didn't give any other details of the tests. Chinese drug regulators approved the tests last Novem-

At that time, state media said the vaccine, already tested on monkeys, was developed by Chinese scientists who have studied the genetics of the AIDS virus since 1996. China says it has 840,000 people infected with the

AIDS virus and 80,000 with the full-blown disease. But health experts say the true figures are much higher and warn that China could have 10 million people infected by 2010 unless it takes urgent action.

After years of denying that the disease was a problem, the communist government has become more open about its AIDS epidemic, though activists are still regularly detained and harassed

In the world's biggest study of an experimental AIDS vaccine, Thai and U.S. researchers have been testing a combination of two drugs on 16,000 That volunteers since 2003.



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, center, talks to his prime minister, Ahmed Qureia, on Sunday during a Fatah party central committee meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Over the week Hamas announced it will participate in the upcoming July parliamentary elections, challenging Abbas' Fatah movement, which has dominated Palestinian politics for four decades.

Hamas says it will challenge Fatah in Palestinian elections

BY KARIN LAUB The Associated Press

JERUSALEM - Hamas will conduct secret primaries to choose its candidates for parliamentary elections in July, the Islamic militant group's first major electoral test, a West Bank leader said Sunday.

Over the weekend, Hamas announced it is participating in the elections, challenging Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement, which has dominated Palestinian politics for four decades

Hamas' decision to compete, coupled with its observance of an unofficial truce with Israel, is a major step in what some see as the group's gradual transformation into a political party.

Hamas is expected to make a strong showing in the election, but it remains unclear to what degree it will become involved in the Abbas government, including future negotiations with Israel

Hamas, which has carried out scores of attacks on Israelis in more than four years of fighting, remains pledged to Israel's destruction. However, it has indicat-

Hamas. Fatah supporters clash at student rally

HEBRON, West Bank - Hundreds of student supporters of the militant Hamas group clashed with supporters of Mahmoud Abbas'

minian riamas group cassies win supporters of Mammoud Adobas ruling Fatah party, throwing punches, sticks and stones during a Hamas campaign rally for student council elections. Hospital officials said at least nine people were injured, including an Agence France-Presse photographer who received five stitches

The massive brawl erupted when several hundred Fatah supporters at Hebron University in the West Bank started shouting their own party's slogans in the midst of a large Hamas rally. Harsh words erupted into a fight, sending photographers and cameramen at the scene running for cover.

Student supporters of the militant Islamic Jihad intervened, acting as a buffer and eventually ending the violent fight between the two narties

ed it is willing to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem as an interim step

Later this week, leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups will meet in Cairo for what Abbas hopes will be a joint cease-fire declaration. Under Egyptian sponsorship, the participants will also try to work out a possible political partnership in the PLO, based on the results of July's election

Mohammed Ghazal, a senior

Hamas leader in the West Bank, said in a telephone interview Sunday that the group would conduct underground registration drive among members and supporters ahead of primaries that would also to be held in secret.

Hamas did well in local elections in Gaza earlier this year, and there is growing concern in Fatah that it will lose its majority in parliament. Fatah has commissioned internal polls to determine the most electable candidate, and the movement's Old Guard has promised younger activists to hold pri-

Italy bombing

ROME - An explosion at a church in northeastern Italy during Sunday Mass seriously injured a 6-year-old child and raised fears that an unknown bomber active in the area had struck again.

Two other people had slight ininries

Investigators said the cause of the explosion at the Roman Catholic church in Motta di Livenza was still unclear. However, the town's mayor said officials suspected the perpetrator was the "Italian Unabomber," who is believed responsible for a dozen explosions in the area over the past decade

Neo-Nazi march

FRANKFURT. Germany Hundreds of neo-Nazis marched through the streets of Dessau on Saturday, marking the 60th anniversary of the Allied bombing of the east German city earlier this

City officials officially marked the anniversary with a memorial service on Monday, but church and other leaders called 500 peaceful demonstrators to march Saturday against the far-right ex-

Roughly 300 neo-Nazis participated in Saturday's protest marking the March 7 anniversary of the 1945 bombing that destroyed 80 percent of the city and killed hundreds of residents

Portuguese inauguration

LISBON, Portugal - Portugal's new Socialist prime minis-ter, an opponent of the U.S.-led war in Irag, took office Saturday. promising to keep good relations with Washington.

Jose Socrates also said Portugal, which is strongly pro-European, might hold a referendum on the European Union constitution at the same time as local elections next October.

Portugal is one of Europe's poorest countries, and Socrates used his inaugural speech to remind the Portuguese of the efforts ahead

Unemployment rose to six-year high of 7.1 percent at the end of last year, and economic statistics show the country falling behind the rest of the European

1 dead in Saudi clashes

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia - A suspected Islamic militant was killed and three others were arrested in clashes with police in the coastal Red Sea city of Jiddah, after Saudi security forces discovered a wanted militant hiding in a residential building, authorities said Sunday.

The shootout was the latest in a 2-year-old crackdown on Islamic militants by the Saudi monarchy. which has been struggling to put an end to suicide bombings and terror attacks on security and Western targets.

From The Associated Press



IN THE STATES

Gunman kills 7, self at Wis. hotel Tsunami center sued

BY RYAN NAKASHIMA The Associated Press

BROOKFIELD, Wis. - Police have found no clear motive for why a man opened fire with a handgun during an evangelical church service at a hotel, killing seven people before taking his

Investigators found no suicide note or any other documents that could tell them what led to the shooting rampage Saturday in this Milwaukee suburb. Police Chief Daniel Tushaus said Sun-

Terry Ratzmann, 44, fired 22 shots, stopping once to reload, and then shot himself in the head at the Sheraton hotel. Tushaus

About 50 to 60 people were sitting in a meeting room when Ratzmann walked in from the back and started firing, Tushaus said. Witnesses told police he didn't

say anything before he fired.
"At this point, we're unable to determine if he had specific targets or he just shot at random,' police Capt. Phil Horter said.

Police searched Ratzmann's home in New Berlin, about two miles from the hotel, and seized three computers and a rifle, Hort-

Investigators were looking into reports that Ratzmann became upset during a church service a few weeks ago and walked out, and he also may have been about

to lose his job. Horter said. Ratzmann was affiliated with the Living Church of God, which



From left to right, Chelsey Porth, Kaitlin Schaeren, Ariel Reuter and Kelly Rooney, all of New Berlin, Wis., leave flowers outside the Sheraton Hotel Saturday, in Brookfield, Wis. A gunman opened fire Saturday at a church service being held at the hotel, killing seven and himself and wounding several others, police said.

had been meeting at the hotel every Saturday morning for four

or five years "This is a terrible tragedy. We are cooperating with the authorities to find out what happened, the Charlotte, North Caroli-na-based group said on its Web

At one point during the shooting, a friend of Ratzmann's confronted him and pleaded with him to stop shooting, Horter said.

Tushaus did not identify the victims but gave approximate ages.

Two boys ages 15 and 17, a 72-year-old man and a 55-year-old man and a 55-year-old woman died at the hotel. Three men ranging in age from 44 to 58 died later at a hospi-

Four other people were hospitalized in serious condition After the shootings, police removed a pickup truck from the hotel parking lot

New Berlin Mayor Telesfore Wysocki said police told him the gunman lived with his mother and sister, who were being interviewed by officers as police collected evidence at their house

"We are in total shock and disbelief," the mayor said.

Neighbors said Ratzmann was a devout churchgoer and avid gar-dener who built his own greenhouse and shared homegrown vegetables with his neighbors.

by survivors, victims' kin

The Associated Press

HONOLULU — The federal igency that operates the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center is being sued by Indian Ocean tsunami survivors and relatives of victims.

The suit alleges the center in Ewa Beach and other defendants did not do enough to protect peonle from the Dec. 26 tsunami. which killed as many as 300,000 people throughout southern Asia.

The lawsuit the court to preserve evidence for the plaintiffs so they can decide whether to pursue damages, an attorney said.

"At least they should have the option to know what is going on, said Edward Fagan, the U.S. attor-ney for the plaintiffs group. which includes at least 58 European survivors and victims' family

The lawsuit claims the Thai government is destroying and concealing evidence that will prove its officials knew of the approaching tsunami but chose not to issue a warning fearing its effect on the country's tourism industry. The suit was filed last week

Named as defendants are the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Thailand's government, its Meteoro-logical Department and the Accor group, the French owner of the Sofitel hotel chain in Phuket, Thai-



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SUBMINISTRACE DIN SER SERVE

Family, friends in awe over shooting

ATLANTA - Two pictures have emerged of the man police say went on a bloody rampage through Atlanta - allegedly killing a judge and as many as three others before his arrest Saturday at a suburban apartment complex. Family members describe Brian

Nichols as a "good person" who came from a stable home and avoided the temptations of the street. Former classmates and coaches on

the other hand, recall him as a physically intimidating martial arts expert a knack for trouble.

Police say Nichols, a former computer technician who was on trial for rape. overpowered a female sheriff's deputy Friday and shot and killed Judge Row land Barnes, who was presiding over his case. He also is accused of killing the judge's court reporter and a deputy who tried to stop him as he fled the downtown courthouse.

Nichols is also a suspect in the shooting death of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agent



Nichols

David Wilhelm, whose body found Saturday in north Atlanta.

"We're trying to understand this hole thing," Nichols' sister-in-law whole thing," Nichols' sister-in-law Felisza Nichols said from her home in the Plantation, Fla.Nichols was briefly a student at Kutztown University in eastern Pennsylvania. He left the uni-versity in the fall semester of his sophomore year. Nichols was arrested at least three times during his short stay at the university.

Nick Pergine, who played football with Nichols at Kutztown, said Nichols' massive physical presence and martial arts skills earned him a reputation as someone to be careful around. "He was a bad dude."

Felisza Nichols says the portrait of her 33-year-old brother-in-law as a bloodthirsty killer doesn't make sense. "He's a good person," she said

Rice reiterates that she will not run for president

BY MIKE ALLEN

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described herself Friday as "mildly pro-choice" and "kind of libertarian" on abortion as she once again ruled out running for

Rice told The Washington Times last week she "can't imagine" running to succeed her boss and that she is "not trying to be elected." But she said she knows people are talking about the possibility, and did not rule it out when pressed repeatedly. The State Department released a transcript of the interview Saturday.

She closed the door in appearances on Sunday talk shows, telling NBC's "Meet the Press," "I will not run for president of the United States.

"I won't run." she told ABC's "This Week." "I won't. How's that? Is that categorical enough?'

The Republican platform is strongly anti-abortion, and abortion opponents play a big role in many primaries. Rice explicated her views when a questioner from the newspaper told

her that the written record was murky "If you go back to 2000 when I helped the president in the campaign," she said, "I said that I was, in effect, kind of libertarian on this issue. And meaning by that, that I have been con-

cerned about a government role in this issue. I am a strong proponent of parental choice — of parental notification. I am a strong proponent of a ban on late-term abortion. These are all things that I think unite people and I think that that's where we should be. I've called myself at times mildly pro-choice.' Many Republicans have expressed curiosity about her

views on social issues as she assumed a higher profile and as it became increasingly clear that the early field for 2008 had no obvious Bush successor.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.





Left: Marchers gather on the steps of the state Capitol in Montgomery, Ala. Above: The Rev. Joseph Lowery, a co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, appears Saturday,

4-year-old shoots 2-year-old brother

HOUSTON - A 2-year-old was shot by his 4-year-old brother, who may not have known the difference between a real gun and a toy gun, police said.

The 2-year-old, who suffered a single gunshot wound to the temple, was in critical condition Saturday night at Ben Taub Hospi-

The shooting occurred Saturday afternoon at a home in southwest Houston.

Police Sgt. Cameron Grysen said the boys had been arguing when the 2-year-old threw a toy at his brother

The mother thought the boys had returned to their room, but they had instead gone to her room, where the older boy took a loaded gun from the woman's

"The 4-year-old was angry . he went and got the gun, put it to his brother's head and shot the gun," Grysen said.

The mother told police she had the .32-caliber automatic to protect her family because of recent neighborhood burglaries, and that Saturday was the one day that she did not secure the weapon.

She could face criminal charges Authorities said the 4-year-old didn't seem to understand what he had done.

Extension of Voting Rights Act urged By Samira Jafari Weeklong re-enactment

The Associated Press MONTGOMERY, Ala. - Black politicians must urge Congress to extend the Voting Rights Act, civil rights leaders said Saturday at the finale of the re-enactment of the Selma-to-Montgomery march that helped

lead to passage of the law.
The Voting Rights Act of 1965 "was the single most significant piece of legislation in the century," the Rev. Joseph Lowery, a co-founder of the Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference, told a crowd of nearly 300 marchers at the state Cap-

In 1965, no blacks held major office in Alabama, University of Alabama political scientist William Stewart said.

By 2001, there were more than 755 black

of historic march ends elected officials in Alabama, according to the most recent figures available from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Across the South, the number has grown from 70 to nearly 7,000. The first voting rights march was halted at

the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma by state troopers and sheriff's deputies who attacked activists with clubs and tear gas on March 7, 1965, "Bloody Sunday." A second march two weeks later was led by

the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and had the protection of a federal court order.

Marchers went from the bridge over the Al-

abama River to the steps of the state Capitol in Montgomery.

The attack and the marches inspired passage of the Voting Rights Act, which barred obstacles such as literacy tests that were set up by segregationists to keep blacks from registering to vote

Certain provisions of the Voting Rights Act. such as the use of federal examiners and a requirement for Justice Department approval of election law changes, will be up for renewal by Congress in 2007

"I bring a message to all elected officials said Keif Schleifer, 43, of Atlanta, who walked the entire 54-mile trek with about 50 other people this past week

"We've marched from Selma to Montgom erv to exercise our patriotic right. We are watching your every action. We are holding you accountable. We are not going away.

Gridiron dinner features a comedy of errors by GOP, Dems

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Bush poked fun at himself at the press corps Saturday night and offered a new reason for overhauling the Social Security system.

Raising the name of Defense ecretary Donald Rumsfeld. Secretary Bush said. "We have to fix it or Rumsfeld may never retire. Bush noted - with a little help

the presence of a number of new Cabinet members attending the Gridiron Club's 120th annual dinner Turning to Vice President Dick

Cheney, the president said, "Dick, maybe you can point them out to me

Some of the press skits he had

watched earlier in a long evening were about steroid use in professional enorts but Rush said that in looking out at the press corps he was confident none of them were on steroids

"Those are all natural bodies." he said.

Bush said anyone looking for a transcript of the evening's program should call Doug Wead, the longtime Bush family friend who recently made public tape recordings of private telephone conversations he had with Bush before he started running for president.

The president noted that former President Clinton was recovering from surgery and said that "when he woke up he was surrounded by his loved ones" - his wife, daughter and "my dad."

The former President Bush and Clinton have become something of an item despite their once fierce political rivalry.

Earlier in the evening, woman pretending to be John Kerry's wife sang about how happy she is that he wasn't elect-ed. Karl Rove revealed his successful strategy for winning President Bush a second term. Wannabe presidential candidates pressed for advantage in the 2008

was as close to "Saturday Night Live" as Washington gets, as journalists assumed the personas of politicians in song, dance and wisecracks.

The Gridiron Dinner is a journalistic tradition in which, for one night, members of the Fourth Es-

tate turn the tables on the powerful people they report and write about daily. The Gridiron Club's motto is to "singe, but never hum

In a nod to 2008, they parodied the White House aspirations of Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel of oraska and Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico featured sneakers at the white-tie

Richardson Bush's administration's treatment of U.S. allies over the Iraq war to the NCAA basketball tour nament

"Sixty-four teams start and they're whittled down to just one," Richardson said in pre-pared remarks. "Kind of reminds me of what we've done with our al-

Hagel paid tribute to Johnny Carson, a Nebraska legend, by im "Carnac the Magnif personating ' cent," one of the late comedian's characters March Madness

"Answer: March Madness," Hagel said. "What do Democrats call my Social Security plan?

Having observed their routine, Bush called Richardson and Hagel "a couple of independent thinkers, which in my book is a

negative."
Other 2008-themed skits porrayed Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York singing about how she'll "turn those red states blue" and Senate newcomer Barack Obama of Illinois, prancing around in a gold outfit and halo, urging the party to "go with a guy who walks on

Up in the Western sky, it's not a bird or a plane, but a streaking meteor

PORTLAND Ore Dozens of residents in the Pacific Northwest reported seeing a bright streak of light as it flashed across the sky, startling witnesses from southern Oregon to the Seattle area, offi cials said

Scientists said the flaming object was probably a meteor, and that it likely disinte-grated before any fragments fell into the "It was like a big ball of fire," said Sum-

mer Jensen, who was in her living room Saturday night when she saw the flash of light outside her Portland home

Michael O'Connor, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration's regional office in Renton, Washington, said he fielded numerous calls from people reporting they had seen a bright streak across the sky.

He said police, pilots and some air traffic controllers described it as "a green ball of fire with a long tail

"It appears to have come down over the said Dick Pugh of the Cascadia Meteorite Laboratory in Portland.

He said the object flew over the Pacific Coast, streaking along from south to north

Jim Todd planetarium director at the Oregon Museum of Science & Industry, said that if a meteor had entered the atmosphere during the day, it may not even have been noticed.

"It creates a bright contrast against the night sky," Todd said.

Last year, a meteor that appeared like a fireball was sighted over western Washing-

In March 2003, residents in four Midwestern states also reported seeing a disin-tegrating meteorite flash across the sky.

The adoption wait can be long

There is a backlog of children waiting to be adopted and only 3.6 percent of adults who begin the adoption process succeed in adopting a child. Most of those adopting children are already relatives or foster parents.

Children in foster care

as of Sept. 30, 2002 Awaiting adoption 126,000

Children adopted in FY 2002 53.000

Months children awaiting adoption have

been in continuous foster care 1-5 months 4,428 Each block is one month 6-11 9.266 20 12-17 13.062 Number of children in bold 18-23 13.691 Less than a month 533 30-35 10 945 36-59 29.627

60 or more 30,904 Jan. 1998 Jan. 1999 Jan. 2000 Jan. 2001 Jan 2002 Seni Those waiting Adoptive parents





SOURCE: Department of Health and Human Services

Report: Unfriendly bureaucracy foils many adoptions

44 ... there are

parents who

want to adopt

saying, 'Why

doesn't anuone

return mu

calls?'

Lead report researcher.

Evan R Donaldson

Adoption Institute

Jeff Katz

BY DAVID CRARY The Associated Press

NEW YORK - The backlog of children languishing in foster care could be sharply reduced if state agencies were more friendly and helpful to prospective parents asking about adoptions, according to a new report which says fewer than one of 16 adults who make initial inquiries actually ends up adopting.

The vast majority give up "not because they don't want to, but apparently because they decide not to deal with a system they perceive as too frustrating, bureau-

cratic and just plain unfriendly," the Evan B Donaldson Adop-

The report urges state agencies to set up hotlines staffed by well-trained em plovees who provide callers with immediate, encouraging Throughout the

nrocess, state emplovees should alienating applicants, be cordial

in broaching the issue of background checks, and provide clear information, it said.

A preliminary version of the re-port circulated among adoption professionals last year, and already has had an impact. Barb Holtan, director of a new federal initiative called AdoptUSKids, said the findings prompted her program to form state recruitment response teams with the tomer services" to prospective

"We recruit and recruit (narents), and then when people call they're treated less than enthusiastically," she said Friday.

The report's lead researcher, Jeff Katz, formerly headed Rhode Island's state adoption agency. He and his colleagues surmore than 40 states, analyzed federal data and conducted interviews in Boston, Miami and San Jose, Calif.

"To me, it's shocking," Katz said in a telephone interview. "There are kids in foster care

saying, 'No one wants me' and there are parents who want to saving. adont 'Why doesn't anyone return my

According to the latest federal statistics. from 2002. about 126,000 children were in foster awaiting care adoption. often for many years. Roughly 53,000 children were

adonted from foster care, in most cases by their foster parents or by relatives; Katz said less than 6 percent of the 240,000 other adults who inquired about adoption ended up completing the process.

Katz said state agencies - rather than spending to recruit ever more applicants — should focus on making the process more welcoming, even during the necessary screening to weed out unsuitable parents.

Sophisticated tactics aid Schiavo's parents

Internet assists in fight to keep brain-damaged woman alive

BY MAYA BELL

The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. - Fifteen years ago, two leaders of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue walked into a motel in small-town Missouri and begged the night clerk for a fax machine.

At a nearby hospital, the parents of Nancy Cruzan were set to remove the feeding tube that had kept their daughter alive for nearly eight years. The activists were desperate to mobilize opposition to what they considered would be

"That's how sophisticated we were," remembers the Rev. Pat Mahoney, now executive director of the Christian Defense Coali-

"We were desperately trying to get the word out, desperately trying to get people out. There just wasn't much interest.

Today, Mahoney is a leader of an informal but growing network of conservative, religious and disability organizations who with the click of a computer mouse, are enlisting hundreds of thousands of people in Bob and Mary Schindler's fight to keep their daughter Terri Schiavo alive.

The feeding tube that has pumped life-sustaining nutrients into the severely brain-damaged Florida woman's stomach for 15 years is scheduled to be discon-



Bob and Mary Schindler, parents of Terri Schiavo, listen to supporters at a rally in Pinellas Park, Fla., on Saturday, With words of encouragement from actor Mel Gibson, the family of Terri Schiavo joined a rally Saturday to continue pleading for the brain-damaged woman's life, just days before the court-ordered removal of her feeding tube.

nected Friday under a court order won by her husband, Michael.

The courts have agreed with Michael Schiavo that his wife is in a persistent vegetative state, and although she never wrote down her wishes made it clear in casual conversations that she would have rejected artificial life support.

But turning to the Internet, alternative media and grass-roots organizations to spread their right-to-life messages, what Mahoney calls the "faith-and-values community" has unleashed an avalanche of support for Schiavo's

That has prompted lawmakers in Congress and Tallahassee to file legislation on the Schindlers' behalf and ignited a national debate on the withdrawal of medically supplied hydration and nutri-

tion, drawing the likes of the Vatican, and on Saturday, actor Mel Gibson to their cause.

The first goal of the campaign, Mahoney said, is to save Terri Schiavo's life. But he and others also hope to roll back the laws and ethical and medical guidelines that have evolved since 1990, when the U.S. Supreme Court recognized artificial sustenance and hydration as medical treatment. That ruling eventually cleared the way for Cruzan's parents to remove her feeding tube.

Now, patients or their health-care decision makers in every state have the right to refuse or withdraw artificial feedings under certain circumstanc-That is something many of those joining the Schindlers' campaign reject as immoral and inhumane, and a step down the road to legalizing euthanasia

Federal court upholds most FCC phone number-switching rules

BY GENARO C. ARMAS The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - A federal court on Friday upheld the bulk of Federal Communications Commis-sion rules that allow consumers to keep their phone numbers when they switch providers.

However, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that smaller traditional phone companies didn't have to honor customer requests to transfer a landline number to a cell

The court said the agency needed to study further the impact of the new rules on small companies before the guidelines could go back into effect in those cases. The companies, which serve mainly rural areas, can still voluntarily switch home numbers to a cell phone

One consumer group said the decision might affect companies that serve as much as 10 percent of the U.S. population, or more than 29 million peo-

"We hope the FCC will go back and fill in the record and help consumers in small, rural markets have the flexibility to take their numbers to the provider of their choice," said Gene Kimmelman, senior policy director at Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports magazine

FCC Chairman Michael Powell said he was confident the agency would respond quickly to the court's request.

The ruling was one of two decisions from the appeals court Friday involving the FCC's num-ber-switching rules. The court upheld the remainder of those rules

Powell, who is leaving the agency this month, praised the decisions overall as "a big win for com-

petition and wireless consumers According to the FCC, roughly 10 million cell customers have transferred their numbers to new providers since the rules went into effect in November 2003.Consumer advocates predicted the changes would lead to lower prices, better service and more options for phone customers. Many customers had been reluctant to switch service be

cause it required changing numbers they had

given to relatives, friends and business associates.

Oh, gross! Disgusting exhibit proves popular

BY JOSEPH B. FRAZIER

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Freddie
the Fly lavs it out in terms dear to

the adolescent heart: "My wife's cooking is so bad I vomit before I eat. But seriously ..." Freddie tosses off one-liners like the late Henny Youngman, all of them true It's all about

like the late Henny Youngman, all of them true. It's all about "gross" at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

Freddie, a huge animated model, is the star of the "Vomit Slurpers" exhibit in "Grossology." The Science of Creatures Grossology: The Science of Creatures Grossoloers clustered around as he explains how he upchuckshis digestive juices on a sandwich then sucks up his dimner. "Hey, soup and a sandwich..."

The display and more like it turn the gross into a teaching tool, often with indelicate candor. It's on a North American tour that winds up at Space Center Houston in June 2007.

"RETCH! Kitty hurls a warm hairy hot dog!" reads a display on feline hair balls that also gives a clear diagram of what makes Fluffy tick

At the Dung-Ball Rally, a much-larger-than-life dung beetle (the Egyptians called them scarabs) boasts, "I can push a ball of poop 50 times my weight uphill." A video game challenges youngsters to see whose beetle can get his dung ball to the top first dung ball to the top first.

But there's a message here.

A fly, the exhibit notes, can carry 1.25 million bacteria and any of 100 diseases; the dung bee-

tle is imported to Texas pastures and one can bury 1,000 pounds of cow droppings a year.

Exhibit visitors also learn that doctors were called "leeches" in Old English because they used leeches to suck the blood of patients they were treating. The practice is not totally dead.

The classrooms of kids who file through could watch it spelled out on the blackboard back at school. But this way, museum officials hope, they will remember.

"It's a safe space for kids," said Cara Wolf-Feather, an educator at the museum. "They can say things they can't say at home. And they may be grossed-out, but they may be lured in deeper to find out more."

Animal Grossology follows a popular exhibit of "Grossology: The (Impolite) Science of the Human Body" that toured nationally and broke many attendance

The human grossology display at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, which billed it as "Know Thy Poop," drew 400,000 visitors in three months, more than double any other springtime show it has hosted.

The grossology concept comes from Sylvia Branzei, a former science teacher from Port Roberts, Wash., whose five books on human and animal grossology have sold in the hundreds of thousands.

Branzei said the target age is 8 to 12 but the exhibits try to accommodate everyone.

Average time 8- to 18-year-olds

She said the idea came in 1993 when she was clipping her toenails. "It literally hit me: 'What's



Susan Manquist, left, of Vancouver, Wash., and her children, Katie, 7, and Benjamin, 9, check out the display of a vomiting fly on top of a giant chocolate chip cookie at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland, Ore. The display is part of "Grossology: The Science of Creatures Gross and Disgusting," the brainchild of a former science teacher designed to turn the gross into a teaching tool, which is on a North American tour winding up at the Space Center in Houston in June 2007.

that gunk made of?' Kids like gross stuff. I wanted to teach them science. It was born right then and there."

However, Branzei, who stopped classroom teaching a couple of years ago, said she has

HOLIDS - MINITES

avoided the grotesque.

"I stay in areas that most people experience themselves. For example, I stay away from elephantiasis. It's not what most people experience. We make fun of all of ourselves, not just certain xamples."

And parents seem to like the show. "They'll tell me, 'Oh my gosh, my child loves science a

She said an educational TV series may be in the offing.

Texas OKs cupcakes in classrooms

The Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Amid a tense education funding debate, Texas House members paused Wednesday to take up a matter dear to school kids everywhere: cuncakes.

Legislators in a unanimous recorded vote cleared the way for public school students to bring the sweet treats — complete with candy sprinkles — to celebrate their birthdays. "We have an opportunity to real-

ly make the children happy here," said Rep. Jim Dunnam, a Waco Democrat, asking fellow House members to approve the measure requested by his school-age daughter, Lauren.

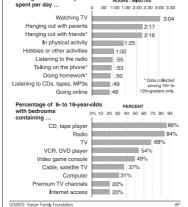
Texas Agriculture Commission-

er Susan Combs, whose agency oversees the state's school lunch program, imposed new healthy food rules aimed at limiting or eliminating junk food and food that competes with cafeteria fare.

In August, soon after setting the new rules, Combo issued a "cupcake clarification" stating that cakes and cupcakes could brought to school for birthdays. The agriculture department did, however, recommend that birthday parties be scheduled after the last lunch period.

Study finds media-saturated youth

A new study has found young people ages 8 to 18 have an unprecedented amount of media in their daily lives and surroundings, spending up to six and a half hours a day in media-related activities.



Kids' rooms loaded with new technology

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It wasn't too long ago that a kid with a stereo and television in his room might have been the coolest on the block. Now, that just makes him one of the crowd.

In the past five years, many children's rooms have evolved into multimedia centers, with cable or satellite hookups, computers and video game consoles.

For instance, 20 percent of youngsters age 8 to 18 can surf the Web from their bedrooms, double the figure from 1999, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey released Wednesday.

That has helped turn kids into "media multitaskers," researchers suggest. Nearly one-third of kids say they chat on the phone, surf the Web, instant message, watch TV or listen to music "most of the time" while doing their homework.

What effect this behavior has on the often fragile ability of kids to focus is unclear because detailed research is fairly new, said Vicky Rideout, the foundation vice president who directed the study. Some of the blame — or praise

Some of the blame — or praise — rests with the Internet and technology such as instant messaging, tools widely used for education and entertainment, said Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Kaiser surveyed more than the control of the contro

On average, kids devoted six hours and 21 minutes a day to recreational media use, an increase of just two minutes from 1999, the Kaiser study found.

That still amounts to over 44 hours a week — four more hours than a parent's typical work week.

But 26 percent of kids in 2004 said they "multitasked" when using any form of media, compared with 16 percent five years earlier. Over the same period the proportion of kids' homes that have two or more computers imped from 25 percent to 39 percent, and the proportion with Internet access in the home grew from 47 percent to 74 percent. The proportion of kids who had

The proportion of RIGS Who had a VCR or DVD player in their room rose from 36 percent to 54 percent, while the proportion with cable or satellite TV in their own room grew from 29 percent to 37 percent.

FACES

From 'Sideways' to parting ways

Director Alexander Payne and wife Sandra Oh have gone from "Sideways" to parting ways, a spokeswoman



told People magazine on Saturday. The Hollywood couple "have mutually decided to sen arate," the spokeswoman said

They will remain friends. The couple met five years

ago and married in 2003 Payne wrote and directed "Sideways," the comedy about two friends on a wine-tasting road trip through California. Payne shared the Academy Award with his writing part-

Rocker says he's happy to be drug free

Velvet Revolver frontman Scott Weiland says he is off drugs for good, according to the April issue of Esquire



Weiland, whose band won a Gram my last month, credits his sobriety of more than a year to seeing his second marriage crumble because of his addiction.

Weiland, 37, said his "preoccupation with catching a buzz" began in his early teens, when he began drinking liquor. He tried cocaine in high school and had moved on to heroin by the time he was 24 and touring with his previous group, Stone Temple Pilots, saying it made him feel safe and more confident about his music

He said he was motivated to clean up his act and try to get his family back after two arrests in 2003 - one for h oin and cocaine possession and the other for driving under the influence. "Right now, for the first time in my life, I'm finally happy," the singer told the magazine.

Stewart's marriage proposal accepted

Rod Stewart has proposed to his longtime girlfriend at the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Stewart's record company said Saturday.

Record label BMG said Stewart, 60, went down on one knee and proposed to 33year-old Penny Lancaster at the French landmark on the French landmark Wednesday. She accepted.

"I left it this long, because I wanted to get it right this time." Stewart said in a state-"I've never been happiment er and more in love than I am

Young, said the couple would make wedding plans once Stewart's divorce from model



previously married to Alana Stewart

PETA targets J.Lo's fur-wearing ways

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals wants Jennifer Lopez to "Get Right" when it comes to fur. Lopez introduced her Sweetface fashion collection dur-

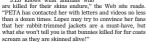
ing New York Fashion Week last month "Please don't support Jennifer

Lopez or her bloody business," says a Web site — www.jlodown.com that the animal rights group has de voted to the singer, actress and now fashion designer. Calls seeking comment from Lo-

pez's publicist weren't immediately returned Friday.

The site encourages visitors to "write to J.Lo and tell her that promoting the violence of the fur industry is a low-down, dirty, rotten

"J.Lo knows what animals who



Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Courtesy of Twentieth Century For

Robin Williams provides the voice of the animated character Fender in the movie "Robots."

Robin Williams tuned in to 'toon role in 'Robots'

voices. I can

play and create.

You can't find

too many parts

that allow you

and it's easier to

look at muself.

Voice of Fender in 'Robots'

Robin Williams

such freedom -

BY NANCY MILLS New York Daily News

HOLLYWOOD n an ideal world, Robin Williams would have been born a cartoon.

After all, merely human roles rarely give him the chance to free-associate, deliver dozens of accents and leap through his imagination the way no regular peron ever does. And, let's face it, when he starts doing his sh tick offstage, he occasionally wears out his welcome.

With his outsize personality, it's little wonder that Will-

iams has a serious affinity for the animated world. He even took a stand for SpongeBob SquarePants on Oscar night, arriving with his mouth taped shut because producers rejected his plan to sing a satirical song about the undersea character

"They tell me now that SpongeBob is gay," Williams said, referring to a conservative religious group's criticism that the 'toon had a "pro-homosexual" agenda.
"SquarePants is not gay," Williams told the Kodak Theatre crowd. "TightPants maybe. SpongeBob HotPants? You go, girl

When he took the role of the Blue Genie in 1992's "Aladdin," Williams crafted one of the most indelible characters in animation history.

But with "Robots," it's possible that Will-

iams addicts will begin calling him "Fender." Fender is Williams' first animated role since "Aladdin." The red robot with a coffeepot for a head may not look much like the 53-year-old comic, but they share a certain manic energy.

Fender is "a Skid Row burn, a man living hand to foot who puts the 'funk' in dysfunctional," Williams says. He also talks nonstop - sound familiar? - and keeps losing body parts to

The performance makes use of Williams' hyperactivity without, as he puts it, "my having to train. Animators can

create the physicality I could never get near "You get a bit of carte blanche," he adds. "I love doing the voices. I can play and create. You can't find too many parts that allow you such freedom — and it's easier to look at myself.

Since he could easily supply the voices for an entire cast of animated characters, cartoons could be Williams' main source of income, if he didn't love doing standup comedy and making live-action movies. Two of the latter will open this year, the coming-of-age tale "House of D" (opening next month) and a black comedy, "The Big White."

Later this year, he'll start production on two more. One is the drama "The Night Listener," based on an Armistead Maupin story. The other is "RV," a comedy Williams says is about "a blue-state guy traveling in a red state."

For "Robots," director Chris Wedge says all he had to do was turn Williams loose.

"We'd bring Robin ideas and script pages, and he'd very politely read the words we'd written," Wedge says. "Then he'd start lifting off. He'd hit on something and go off for 20 minutes. The glass in the booth would be full of condensa-

Although Wedge admits, "We were able to use only about 1 percent of what he created," they did manage to include his riff on "Singin' in the Rain And the eventual DVD outtakes will probably feature a

sequence in which Fender's unattached right hand tries to romance his equally on-the-loose left hand — in a heavy Hispanic accent.

Set in a computer-generated world inhabited by mechan-ical people, "Robots" tells the story of idealistic young Rodney Copperbottom (voiced by Ewan McGregor), who

dreams of being an inventor and sets off for the big city with his father's blessing. Natu-44 I love doing the rally, his life does not go smoothly, even

with Fender as a close friend.

Williams related to the follow-your-dreams scenario. "I loved the scenes between Rodney and his father because of my dad," he says.
"My dad told me, 'Do what you want to

do. I will help you. If you want to be an actor, that's great. Just have a backup pro-"I actually went to one welding class,

and the guy teaching it had one eye be-cause he lost the other in a welding accident," he adds. "But my dad was good with support. Thanks, Dad."

As a father of three — Zach. 21. Zelda.

15, and Cody, 13 — Williams is trying to be equally supportive. "Zach is studying linguistics right now,"

he says. "Maybe he'll open a syntax repair shop. Maybe he'll work for a few years and then study law.

"Cody has got a real wry sense of humor," he adds. "He writes very layered, intense poetry. And Zelda has the voic-

es." She'll appear with her father in "House of D."

After some troubled years in which he fought through drug addiction and a messy divorce, Williams seems to be at a peaceful point in his life. Even he has noticed that his

comic libido may finally be starting to ebb. "My wife, Marsha, says that if more than two people come into a room, I go into a certain mode," he says. "But

the older I get, the mode gets less like, 'Hello! "It's tiring, but it's invigorating," he adds. "Drama is cathartic, but you feed off comedy. It builds you.

"And sometimes it works the other way. If an audience is not laughing, you'll feed off them — sometimes in an angry way, but sometimes in a challenging way. 'I can get these people. What is the key?

"Only later you find out they're deaf."

Fit on a flight

AK ANCHORAGE — A man denied alcohol during a United Airlines flight went on a rampage, breaking tray tables and other equipment, the FBI said

Brian A. Casias, 35. has been charged with interfering with the flight crew on Flight 711 from Denver to Anchorage.

Casias, of Commerce City, Colo... was heard swearing as he boarded the flight Tuesday, and the plane's captain advised him that he would not be served alcoholic beverages.

When a flight attendant denied Casias' request for a drink, he allegedly threw his tray of food down and spat repeatedly on the floor, the FBI said

Casias allegedly ripped the phone off the back of the seat and broke two tray tables, throwing them to the floor, the FBI said.

Casias also is accused of urinating on the floor of the lavatory, where he allegedly broke a handicapped bar and a changing table. He also is accused of swearing repeatedly and of smoking several cigarettes on the plane.

Ranists drunk at center

FI ARCADIA — Violent sexual predators at a privately operated treatment center brew their own alcohol, wander around "staggering drunk" and often have brutal fights, state investigators found.

A report by the Department of Children & Families' inspector general portrays the Florida Civil Commitment Center as a largely lawless place where rapists and child molesters freely consume alcohol and brawl

"All residents and staff interviewed admitted 'everyone' knows the residents make and consume homemade alcohol, called 'buck,' " the report completed last month said. "Two residents during the investigative interview admitted being intoxicated at the time."

Foreign pledge protest

MILLERSVILLE — A ninth-grader is protesting his school's decision to broadcast the Pledge of Allegiance in foreign languages as part of National Foreign Language Week

Patrick Linton said he and other students at Old Mill High School sat down rather than stand when the Pledge was read over the school's public address system in Russian. Linton's teacher told him if he had a problem he should leave the room

He did, and did not plan to return this week.

"This is America, and we got soldiers at war," the 15-year-old said. 'When you're saying the Pledge in a different language which nobody understands that's not OK

Tour boats seized

HONOLULU - Two tour boats owned by Dream Cruises were seized by the U.S. Marshals Service because the company was in default of a \$1.4 million mortgage on the vessels, according to officials and court docu-

The American Dream in Kewalo

pline and scheduling difficulties

Girl stranded

DALLAS — A school bus driver accused of forcing a 5-year-old girl to get off the bus more than a mile from her scheduled stop was placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation

Jadian Anderson said the driver made her daughter. Syria, get off the bus after she complained that another student was hitting her

"He did not leave her with another adult; he left her on the street. Anderson said, "He was very negliand he endangered child

Syria walked about a half-mile before a crossing guard saw her and noticed she was crying. While the guard was trying to figure out where she lived, a relative drove by, saw the girl and picked her up.

Dallas County Schools spokes-woman Deanne Hullender said that if the driver acted inappropriately, officials will "take the proper action '

Dorm shower cam

HAMDEN — A Quinnipiac CT HAMDEN — A Quinnipiac University student has been sanctioned for allegedly hiding a video camera in a dormitory shower.

University officials refused to name the student and would not say what the sanctions were. The student was sanctioned

after a story about the hidden camera appeared in the student newspaper, the Chronicle.

Doug Manners, a sophomore ournalism major from East Longmeadow, Mass., reportedly discovered the camera

Manners noticed something with red lights attached to a shower grate in the Troup residence hall on Feb. 6, the Chronicle reported. He and his roommate took the grate out of the ceiling and found the camera, which was connected to an adapter and electrical cord.

The two students brought the camera to the dorm's residential assistant who called campus security. Officers confiscated the equipment and inspected other bathrooms in the dorm

DMV files stolen

NORTH LAS VEGAS — Personal information from more than 8,900 people was stolen when thieves broke into a Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles office, officials said Friday

A computer taken during the break-in contained names, ages, dates of birth. Social Security numbers, photographs and signatures of southern Nevada residents who obtained driver's licenses between Nov. 25 and March 4 at the North Las Vegas office, state DMV chief Ginny Lewis said.

The DMV had previously maintained that the information on the computer stolen in Monday's break-in was encrypted, making it virtually useless to thieves.

But Lewis said Friday that Digimarc Corp., the Beaverton, Ore.,-based company that provides digital driver's licenses in Nevada, told her Thursday the information was not encrypted, and was readily accessible



Kate Pfeiffer tunnels Watch out, coming through her way out onto the street at the home of her grandmother, Valerie Pfeiffer, in Augusta, Maine



Husband on the run Saad Mian runs from his wife, Sara, as she attempts to wallop him with a ball during a family picnic at Menominee Park in Oshkosh, Wis.



Winter fun Taking advantage of one of the last days of their winter vacation, Kristin Korona, top, and Danielle LaMontagne, both of Londonderry, N.H., test out the sledding hill at Roby Park in Nashua, N.H.



AMERICAN

ROUNDUP

Basin and its sister ship the Kona

Dream in Kona won't be allowed to

operate until court proceedings

are completed, a spokesman for

Deputy marshals posted "No

trespassing" signs aboard the ves-

sels while employees were allowed

to remove personal belongings. About 75 employees are affected.

el Watson said he was surprised by

the action. He acknowledged being a couple of months late on pay

ments, but he said he was in discus-

sions with the lender for a new pay-

Teachers dropping out RI PROVIDENCE — Nineteen

troubled Hope High School have

told administrators they intend to

transfer to other schools, accord-

ing to Hope administrators and

Another 55 faculty told a screen-

ing committee they intend to stay

at the school, which had faced a

state takeover but will undergo

Some of the teachers who indi-

cated they'll transfer told inter-

viewers they had tired of past re-

form efforts, according to Frances

Gallo, chief of administration.

Many cited poor attendance, trans-

widespread changes instead.

state education officials.

members of the faculty at

Dream Cruises President Micha-

the service said

ment plan.

Getting the job done Edward Oliver, who works for the Anderson Parks and Recreation Department, paints a trash can green at the Darwin H. Wright Municipal Park in Anderson, S.C.



Enjoying the view

Dick Droghei catches some air with his stunt kite at O.K. Ward Park in Chubbuck. Idaho.



Bringing down the house Abulldozer pushes together be a two-room school in Ellis, Neb. Russ' Excavating of Beatrics knocked the building down after satisfying asbestos concerns raised by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, and the rubble will be burned and buyied at a later date.



Swimming pretty
A pair of black swans swim in an
exhibit at the 134th annual New
England Spring Flower Show, at
the Bay Side Expo Center in Bos-



Peaceful sunset As the setting sun paints the sky, a cow and two calves walk high on a ridge near Belt, Mont.

Anti-Bush road rage

TAMPA — A man apparently enraged by a Bush-Cheney sticker on a woman's sport utility vehicle chased her for miles and tried to run her off the road while holding up an anti-Bush sign. police said.

"He told our officers that he just got mad at her, so he went after her," said police spokesman Joe Durkin.

Nathan Alan Winkler, 31, was freed on \$2,000 bail on a charge of aggravated stalking, which carries up to five years in prison.

No one answered the telephone Thursday at Winkler's home, but his father, John Winkler, said: "I know that he's very anti-Bush. But I don't see him doing anything like that. He's the least aggressive person I know."

Fernandez was taking her 10-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter to a ball field when the incident occurred.

Raise your right paw

AR BENTONVILLE — Prosecutors hoping for a witness in a murder case to roll over were barking up the wrong tree.

They sent out a batch of subpoenas for anyone who had contact with Albert K. Smith while he was jailed awaiting his murder trial.

One of those subpoenas went out to 5-year-old Murphy Smith — Smith's dog, it turned out.

The defendant had written his dog a letter from his cell, and that is how the shih tzu's name got on

the witness list.

Prosecutors realized the mistake after the defendant's brother brought in Murphy to answer the subpoena and a deputy would not let them into the courthouse because no dogs were allowed.

Albert Smith is accused of shooting to death his ex-wife's boyfriend.

Twins neglected

LAKE CARMEL — A set of malnourished 7-year-old twins whose existence was a surprise to neighbors and school officials were found in a dirty, unkempt home in Putnam County, police said.

The twins, Cassidy and John Giordano, who weighed 41 and 30 pounds respectively, were being treated for malnourishment and isolation at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla.

Their parents, Eda and James Giordano of Lake Carmel, were each charged with two counts of endangering a child and were released without bail. Their phone is unlisted and Town Court records did not show an attorney of record.

Chief Donald Smith of the Town of Kent police force, which covers Lake Carmel, said it had probably been several years since the children had left the house.

Drug blamed in murder

DENVER — Nobody disputes that Danny Pommerville beat his 64-year-old grandmother to death with wine bottles last August, leaving her to die in a pool of blood and fleeing the state in her car.

But a defense attorney for the 24-year-old man told jurors that her client was in a PCP-induced

rag

"He snapped. He flipped. The PCP kicked in," Deputy Public Defender Cynthia Mares said. "His grandmother was telling him that he was a loser and that he should be in prison the rest of his life, and he snapped. He doesn't remember most of what happened."

Pommerville is on trial on charges of first-degree murder in the death of his grandmother, Jane Mazza

Animal abuse sentence

CA RIVERSIDE, Calif. — The co-defendant of a former animal rescuer, who pleaded guilty in January to child-endangerment and multiple animal-cruelty charges, has been sentenced to 180 days in custody and four years' probation.

Marla Jean Smith was ordered to start serving her sentence on weekends beginning April 1. Smith helped former partner John Weinhart operate the defunct Tiger Rescue sanctuary. State officials testified during Weinhart's trial that they found one of the couples' children living in a home filled with trash and animal feces.

Officials also found malnourished tiger and leopard cubs in an attic, two alligators in a bathtub, two juvenile tigers in a patio and powerful animal tranquilizers, including PCP, in an unlocked refrigerator.

Street taxi getaway

OGDEN — Police said it seemed more like a movie plot than real life when a taxi driver became the reluctant wheel in for a suspected bank robber's getaway attempt.

The hunt for Donald Archambault, 53, who was suspected of robbing a Salt Lake City bank, ended 30 miles north of Ogden. Archambault bailed out of the cab and was arrested by waiting police.

Cabbie Ali Ahmed didn't realize his customer was wanted until he got a call on his cell phone from a police detective.

Ahmed's fears escalated when the suspect allegedly told him "he would empty his gun" if Ahmed turned him in to police. The suspect didn't know that Ahmed was talking to a detective throughout much of the Interstate 15 ride.

Gangsters get life

DC WASHINGTON — Six members of a drug gang dubbed "Murder Inc." blamed for dozens of killings in the nation's capital were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of pa-

The group's leaders, Kevin L. Gray, 33, and Rodney L. Moore, 39, were convicted last year after an eight-month trial. Gray was sentenced Wednesday to 26 concurrent life terms, plus 285 years. Moore received 14 concurrent life sentences, plus 135 years. Four men who were convicted

last May also were sentenced to multiple life terms.

The Murder Inc. gang is believed responsible for at least 31 killings between 1988 and 1999 as part of a quest to dominate the District of Columbia's cocaine and heroin markets, the U.S. attorney's office said.

Stories and photos from wire services

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Help for mental health

I am an Army Reserve social work officer, currently stationed in Iraq as part of the 1835th Medical Detachment (Combat Stress Control). I thank Stripes for the paper's continued advocacy on mental health issues. In the past eight months I have been grateful to read the many articles educating soldiers about combat stress and post-traumatic stress disorder.

I am writing concerning the Feb. 28 arti-cle titled "Guard's top NCO focuses on mental health of troops" (Mideast edition; "Top NCO in Guard focuses on mental health of troops," European edition). I ap-plaud Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Gipe's

concern for soldiers on this issue. Although the article continues to shine a spotlight on the growing concern for mental health care for soldiers, it failed to mention resources that are available for National Guard and Reserve soldiers. True. guardsmen and reservists can utilize mental health programs on military installations, but they also are entitled to benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs. A variety of programs and services in mental health are available for all honorably discharged veterans. The VA offers both inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services, programs that specialize in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder or substance abuse homeless veteran programs and vocational rehabilitation programs. These services are provided not only in large cities but also in smaller,

community-based outpatient clinics.
Under Title 38, United States Code, 1710(e)(1)(D) and Veteran Health Care Directive 2002-049, the Department of Veteran Affairs provides two years of health care (including mental health care) to all soldiers from their date of discharge, if they served in a combat zone. The two years of free care is regardless of whether the condition or illness was caused by military service. If the illness or injury is caused by military service, the veteran can submit a claim for service-connected disability. Once a veteran is service-connected for a condition, the VA can provide care without cost to the veteran

Although I am not an official VA spokesperson, I want to help get the message out to soldiers that these benefits are avail-

Bradley A McClure

Samarra, Iraa

U.S. winning war on terrorism I am writing in response to the Feb. 24

column "Keeping enemy at bay substi-tutes for victory." Boston University professor Andrew J. Bacevich, back in Massachusetts, utterly fails to recognize, or fails to admit, that the war on terrorism is a new type of war in which old rules and measures don't necessarily apply

"Victory" is something that historians will someday bestow on our current efforts. We have been extremely successful so far. The U.S. homeland has been largely free from a terrorist attack since the Sept. 11, 2001, sucker punch. Afghanistan, which used to be an open haven for terror-

Doonesbury

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or hase and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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ists, has rejoined the civilized nations of the world. Libya has decided it prudent to change its terrorist-supporting ways. And Iraq fails to be the potential nexus between terrorists and weapons of mass destruction that it certainly was before the U.S. military efforts.

The insurgents in Iraq are losing and they know it. How do I know? Here in Baghdad, I talk with optimistic Iraqis daily. They understand that outsiders are coming into their country to cause trouble. These Iraqis want what almost everyone else in the civilized world wants: a chance to live a peaceful life and provide for their family. The insurgents will never overcome this basic human desire.

If we stay the course, we will achieve neace, with justice, throughout the world, But it will probably take a generation or more of diplomacy, economic assistance and, where necessary, military action.

The professor feels it necessary to insult me and the majority of Americans who understand what's going on by claiming "re ality has yet to fully sink in" and that I "continue to snooze." We on the ground understand a lot that the professor, enjoying the peace and security that he would deny others, does not. It is, indeed, liberals like him who are going to make sticking with this effort even more difficult than it already is. I ask: Whose side are you really on, professor?

Travis Hughs Baghdad

Why black enlistments dropped

In response to the March 4 analysis "Study shows Army's black enlistments drop' by Tom Philpott: The spiral downfall in the number of African-Americans in all branches of the military is without a doubt due to all social and political elements that young African-American soldiers can't overcome due to pigmentation barriers and the command leadership.

The bonuses, educational benefits and

all the other perks that come with enlistment and re-enlistment do not meet the standards of our pride and dignity. Some of us in theater are professionals in various career fields in the civilian world, but we will comply with our duties and obligations while wearing the uniform.

We African-American New Yorkers have pride and not an ego; we step to the side until called upon because it is guaranteed that we have been exposed to the environment or situation at hand. I inform my solders that at death you won't leave home, you'll be going home.

In order to keep us from becoming too attached to the military, it allows us to feel a significant amount of discontent and dis-satisfaction. We're not completely happy here because we're not supposed to be.

Last but not least, African-Americans are now attending institutions of higher learning, as they've done in the past; African-Americans have open options for success — not just sports, dance and music. I've been blessed with a God of my understanding, a two-parent household and men tors to guide me in the path that enables me to see clearly what others miss or intentionally avoid, and sidestep.

Staff Sgt. Jay Ordonez Camp Arifian, Kuwait

Support for 'scientific theory'

I am sure Stripes editors are being bombarded by pro-creationists again, so here I am again to address reality vs. belief: Bravo for [Lakenheath Middle School science teacher] Greg Klaes for holding ground on evolution as scientific theory in the March 6 article "DODDS parents, teachers debate evolution vs. creationism' (Europe edition).

Schools need to reinforce what scientific method is, and why we need to separate re-ality from belief. Scientific method relates to data that is verifiable (real) and reliable (repeatable). We need to teach what is real in the schools, as opposed to the various beliefs that people have. Since our schools teach everyone from varying back-grounds, we must stick with scientific method at school.

For religion to "stop at the classroom door," to quote Klaes, is fitting, proper and respectful to all. America has too much diversity to become a theocracy around the beliefs of any one group.

Sandra Grey Vilseck, Germany

Keep insightful 'Doonesbury'

After reading the recent rant (Trudeau strip a 'piece of crap,' " letter, Feb. 28) against the marvelously insightful, frequently irreverent and always entertaincomic "Doonesbury" (i.e.,

fleft-wing-subcutaneous-slandering piece-of-crap"), I am reminded of a quote from a small Vermont newspaper editor. While not intending to impugn the author of the rant, that Vermont editor wrote, "One of the values of the letters to the editor section of a newspaper is that it can open the mouths of fools."

Keep "Doonesbury" and your letter to the editor section. Both provide a great service in support of freedom of speech and the press for which we are all fighting.

Lt. Col. Grant Doty

Baghdad

By GARRY TRUDEAU







OPINION

Painful truth is, Bush's declaration untrue

resident Bush declared in his State of the Union address, "Torture is never acceptable, nor do we hand over people to countries that do torture." Considering what's come to light since then, the most charitable con clusion is that Bush is completely out of the

In recent weeks, past and present admin-istration officials have confirmed that since September 2001 the Central Intelligence Agency has dispatched between 100 and 150 terror suspects to countries where fine points of law and human rights don't stop beatings, drugging or long isolation.

Before the Sept. 11 attacks, the CIA occasionally engaged in this indefensible practice, known as "extraordinary rendition. But afterward. Bush gave the agency wider license to export prisoners in terror-related cases who hadn't been tried or even charged with any crime. Despite his State of the Union declaration, the president apparently has not revoked that au-

IIS law and international conventions bar sending prisoners to another nation unless there are strong assurances of humane treatment

The CIA says with a straight face that it gets those assurances before delivering suspects to jailers in Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Pakistan — countries that have such abysmal human rights are a joke.

Bush has argued that tough new rules of engagement are necessary to fight stateless terrorists. But morality aside, what intelligence of value have U.S. officials gleaned from suspects who've been handed off to modern-day dungeons?

A case in point: In 2002, federal agents arrested Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Cana-dian engineer, at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York because his name appeared on a terrorist watch list. Although Arar insisted that he was not a terrorist, the United States delivered him to Syrian interrogators. After months in a windowless room and regular beatings with thick electric cables, he said, he confessed to anything they wanted just to stop the torment. A year later, Arar was released without charges

This barbarism is why U.S. judges have refused to condone the indefinite detention of terrorism suspects. Yet the military still holds about 500 foreign nationals at the U.S. base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Most have not been charged and have no lawyer, often after years in custody

Two American citizens have been held in military brigs. The evidence against U.S.-born Yaser Esam Hamdi was so flimsy that last year federal agents packed him off to his family in Saudi Arabia rather than present their case in court. This month, a federal judge ordered the administration to charge the second, Jose Padilla, WE'RE REWRITING THE FIRST AMENDMENT ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH TO READ...

...WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK " OUTSOURCING TORTURE without access to a lawyer it's doubtful his

or release him within 45 days, Government lawyers say interrogations produced a lot about Padilla's activities, including his relationship with al-Qaida leaders and his plans to blow up high-rise buildings.

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said last week he may still prosecute him. But because most of Padilla's disclosures occurred while he was in military custody, statements would be admissible in court. These are only the practical issues. The

more haunting problem with Bush's war on terrorism remains the moral one: A nation that considers itself a beacon of freedom seems unable to practice the respect for law and human rights it ardently preaches to others

Contra-indicated: Ortega again in Nicaragua mix

has enough troubles in Latin America dealing with leftist autocrats in Cuba and Venezuela, consider this: A radical former revolutionary leader may

be making a comeback in Nicaragua. Andres Oppenheimer

Daniel Ortega, the former Sandinista president who after the 1979 revolution confiscated the mansion of a wealthy businessman in the name of social justice and immediately moved in, recently crushed a massive movement within his party to

hold primary elec-tions, and had himself declared presidential candidate for the November 2006 elec-

In Washington, Latin America watchers aren't amused: Ortega — in a rare power-sharing alliance with rightist former President Arnoldo Aleman, who is facing charges of illicit enrichment - already controls the Supreme Court, the electoral tribunal, the Comptroller's General of fice and Congress.

Although his negative ratings in Nicaragua are sky-high and his well-organized Sandinista party has historically had a hard time reaching out beyond its 35 percent hard-core support, Ortega could conceivably win next year's elections. "Right now, he is in a very strong posi-

'a senior U.S. official told me last week. "All he has to do is run against a di-vided field, and he is in."

Unlike the leftist presidents of Brazil, Uruguay and Chile. Ortega has shifted back to his radical 1980s rhetoric, and to what many describe as vintage Stalinist

Late last month, Ortega staged an inter-

nal coup within his party, and expelled pop ular former Managua Mayor Herty L wites, who was mounting a challenge to

win the party's presidential nomination. Lewites, who was tourism minister during the Sandinista regime in the 1980s and was elected Managua mayor in 2000, is the country's most popular politician

A recent poll by Borge y Asociados shows that Lewites would win a general election with 40 percent of the vote. Among Sandinista sympathizers, he gets 75 percent of the vote, with 18 percent for Ortega.

Lewites called for a massive Sandinista rally March 6 to protest Ortega's internal coup, but Ortega had a sympathetic court deny him a permit to hold the demonstration. Lewites is challenging the Sandinista expulsion order, and has accused Ortega's goon squads of trying to kill him in a March 3 incident in front of a court where he was summoned to appear.

When I called Lewites last week, I got a message on his cellphone saying, "This is

later that day, he said his troubles with Ortega started recently, "when Daniel [Ortega] saw that the public squares didn't belong to him anymore, after our massive (pro-Lewites) rallies in late February."

Ortega compared the popular ex-mayor with former Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, who Ortega said had committed "crimes against humanity by destroying the Soviet Union. Lewites countered by charging that Ortega's hard-line backers had recently sold properties and made other business transactions worth more than \$3.8 million

"Where did they get that kind of money from?" Lewites asks.

"Facing these accusations, and knowing that I could prove them, they decided to shut up, and expel me from the party.

"This is a fight between an ultra-radical orthodox wing of the party, and a democrat-ic wing," Lewites says. "We're not denying that we will be a leftist government. But it will be a leftist government a la [Chilean

President Ricardo] Lagos, or [Brazilian President Luiz Inacio] Lula da Silva.' Ortega is paying a price for his refusal to

hold primary elections. Top Sandinista leaders are now backing Lewites.

"This is the most serious challenge Ortega has ever faced within his party," says Carlos Fernando Chamorro, a former Sand inista newspaper editor who publishes Confidencial, a political newsletter.

Still, Ortega's ruthless tactics may pay off. While Lewites is ahead in the polls, it's doubtful he could run a successful independent candidacy without the 500,000-member Sandinista party machinery

My conclusion: If the conservative parties are stupid enough - or corrupt enough — to field several candidates. Ortega could win. Nicaragua's democracy is already being kidnapped by a rightist-leftist alliance of mafiosi, and the Bush administration could soon have a major new headache in the region.

BY BRUCE TINSLEY

Andres Oppenheimer is a Latin America correspondent for The Miami Herald

Mallard Fillmore

AND, IN OTHER NEWS, ENSURING HAT, FOR those who are ON FRIDAY, WELL INCESSANTLY HAVE WORKPLACE WISHING HAT PRODUCTIVITY WE WERE OURNAMENT ROUGHLY MORE LIKE KICK OFF EUROPE. THIS to that of FRANCE



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain and snowshowers. Highs in the 40s. Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the 40s. Tuesday lows in the mid-30s to mid-

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-40s to lower 50s. Tuesday lows in the 30s.

France: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the lower 30s to lower 40s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rain and snowshowers. Highs in the 40s. Tuesday lows in the upper 20s to lower 30:

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain and snowshowers. Highs in the upper 30s to lower 40s. Tuesday lows in the upper 20s to lower 30s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 40s. Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

Northern Italy: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 40s to upper 50s. Tuesday lows in the mid-30s to lower 40s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s to upper 60s. Tuesday lows in the 40s.

Kosovo: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 40s. Tuesday lows in the lower 30s.

Norway: Cloudy with rain and snow-showers. Highs in the mid-20s to mid-30s. Tuesday lows in the mid-teens to mid-20s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy becoming cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the mid-50s to mid-60s. Tuesday lows in the mid-50s to mid-50s along the coast and in the 30s inland.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the 40s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAFE Operational Weather Squadron home



SUN & MOON Last qtr 2 Apr 05

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AFRICA

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MIDEAST

Scheduled to ETS or PCS Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.



Horoscope

The sun and Pluto have a tense relationship, strained further by the pressure of a distant ticking clock that rushes us along. Parents are hyper-aware of their children's rate of development. Teens are concerned with grown-up issues, and grown-ups are saving, "Shouldn't I he farther along in life by now?"

Use the question as motiva-TODAY'S RIRTHDAY

(March 14). Love is the magic that keeps you motivated this year. Once you connect with your kindred spirit, you spark a fire that has the potential to burn eternally. Stand up for your ideas in May when you're met with challenge, and vou'll prevai both artistically and financially. As long as you know you're right, whatever they may think or do can't possibly matter.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

All is well in your special relationship as long as you stay tuned to your inklings. In business, sensitize yourself to early warning signs that a deal isn't for you. Beware of someone who has no conscience.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're a regular disturber of the peace! Finally, people are paying attention, though perhaps not in the way you intended. This evening, loved ones impart info that strikes at your very core. Take the time to process it

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's now in vogue to use the word "amazing" to describe even the most ordinary pleasant interaction. However, today, you'll have an exchange that truly is amazing - your jaw will drop, and you'll have to catch your

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

You were gifted with psychic intu ition for a reason, so use it - perhaps to leave that bad boyfriend/girlfriend before you even meet. One good decision affects your whole

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The gods of love are smiling on you. But for the many Leos who are now in

the middle of an important deal, it's important to separate yourself from the outcome — vou're holding on so tight that your desire is getting stran-

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're the Pollyanna of the group



23-Oct. 23). You look around at your team and wonder, "How did I get lumped in with them? And when you consider what higher-ups are

doing, you can't help but be stunned by the hypocrisy of it all. Be the truth

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Sigmund Freud felt that guilt and remorse are often confused, the former stemming from aggressive wishes, the latter a form of self-punishment for the wish fulfilled. Fither emotion is useless today. Get over

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec 21). The mythological centaur that is the symbol of your sign was considered both an uncouth, savage beast and a friendly teacher of men. Both of these sides of your nature will be represented today

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan.

19). Though everyone around seems to be doing the same thing striving for the same goal, it's about time you identified what is unique about you. It's the only way you'll get the powers that he to take notice

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your curiosity could lead you into a precarious position. Stick around and ask enough questions, and you may be initiated into a mystery of some kind. Watch your step, though, since you won't be able to forget

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

what you learn.

You're a solitary thinker. Decision-making by committee isn't for you right now - in fact, that process irritates you. Ask for all the room you need to work out the problem you're facing.

Creators Syndicate

Peanuts

hreath



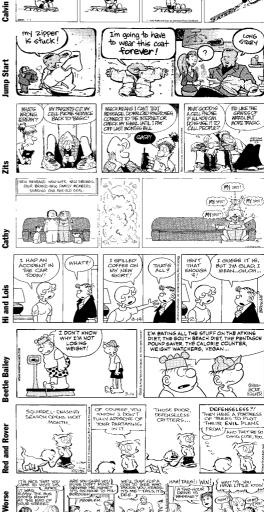




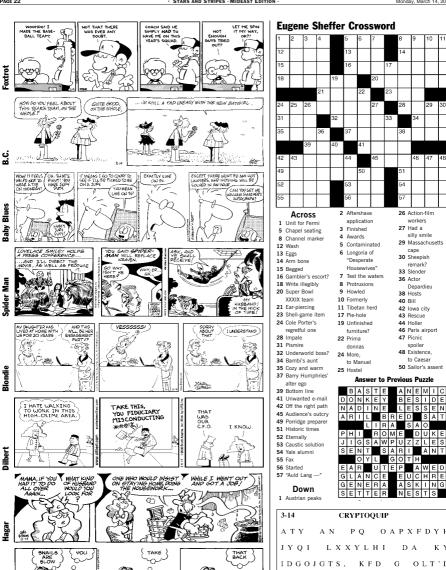


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BUT UNTIL I DECIDE TO DO THAT: THE WALK!



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OAPXFDYH K Y IDGOJGTS, KFD G OLT'D

NGTSYH АТ Saturday's Cryptoquip: I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT CALL THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF A ROBBERY

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals C

THE COMMANDER-IN-THIEF

Kissing co-worker unprofessional

69-year-old grandfather with a good sense of humor and am partly bald. I wear XXL shirts

and have a 46-inch tummy, chub-by cheeks and an occasional limp. I still work in an office where the love of my life, my wife of 40 years, is al Dear Abby

employed. My problem is the firm hired a 50ish married woman who likes men I'll call her "Snuggles. Snuggles wants hugs, gives kisses, and demands to know all the particulars of her fellow employees' lives. I believe this to be innocent on her part, but her brazen behavior really is offensive

Yesterday was my birthday and she kissed me twice on the cheek. It was the fourth time in

the last two weeks.

And yes, I did tell her no more kisses, but I'll bet that only lasts a week or so. When I got home I washed my face and asked my wife to kiss me so that if I died in my sleep, my wife would have been the last woman with whom I shared a kiss

Since Snuggles is a recent hire I don't want to get her in trouble. But, golly gee, I thought I was the one to do the sexual harassing

- Honey Bear in Highland Park, Ill. Dear Honey Bear. Whether or not what

"Snuggles" is doing is called sexual harass ment, her behavior is not acceptable in a business environment Using co-workers as a source of, or outlet for, physical affection is

inappropriate. If she persists, you should document the incidents and discuss the matter with your

boss, your supervisor, or the person in charge of human resources for your company

Dear Abby: Three of us were recently in Manhattan and found ourselves walking behind a blind woman who used a walking stick

one letter to each square. We didn't know if we should to form four ordinary words offer to assist her, or if she would have felt offended. There was scaffolding ahead and the front

stens of several buildings pro truded onto the sidewalk, although she managed to navigate around them without problems. What is considered good man-

ners in a situation like this? - Visitors to N.Y.C. Dear Visitors: It is never offen-

sive to verbally offer assistance to someone. However, a blind per-son using a cane usually has been trained to "detect" objects that might obstruct his or her path.

The reason I say "verbally offer assistance is that some people make the mistake of trying to help blind people by taking their arm and trying to propel them. I have been told that if a blind person accepts an offer of help, he or she would prefer to take the arm of the helper rather than vice versa

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at http://www.uexpress.com/dearabby Universal Press Syndicate

KOBOR

NOOLC

CARBIE

SUTTOM

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



WHERE THE BAND ENDED UP WHEN THEIR CONCERT FIZZLED Now arrange the circled letters

to form the surprise answer, as

suggested by the above cartoon.

Jumbles: Answer

(Answers tomorrow) WOEFUL

IMBUE MOTIVE What they needed to listen to the book on tape - VOLUME VOLUME

Handle past affair with class

Dear Annie: Five years ago, I took a painting class, "Raymond the teacher, was exceptional, and the warm supportive environment he created allowed me to have a breakthrough that changed not only how I felt about myself, but also about my ability to create art. I am eternally grateful to him.

A year after the class ended. I ran into Raymond at an art gallery. I was thrilled when he offered to look at some of my recent paintings.

While at my house, however, he made a pass at me. I was shocked (he's married), but I admit I allowed things to happen because I was so appreciative of his interest. We had five such meetings over the next two years, until I worked up the courage to end it. Raymond accepted my decision, but continued to stay in touch via phone and e-mail

Over time, our contact dwindled to a phone call every few



It was at this point that his wife, "Lorna, discovered my existence. Raymond told her about our affair, and she called me. I made it very clear that the relationship had been a mistake, and I assured her I would not remain in contact with him. I have abided

by that promise, as has

Here's the problem: I would like to attend an upcoming art workshop where Raymond will be one of the teachers, but I'm

sure Lorna will be there, too. - Trying to Move On

in New England Dear Trying: It seems as if you've painted yourself right into a corner. If you insist on attending this particular workshop, you

will need to conduct yourself as if nothing is going on - because nothing is. Politely say hello to Raymond and Lorna when you see them, and then keep right on Dear Annie: I am 14. In September, my brother left to go to college, and ever since, there as been no excitement at home My brother was the clown of the

laugh, and I miss him a lot I'm fine and full of energy at school, but as soon as I get home, I just look sad. My parents com plain that I stay outside all the time, but I don't get why they can't figure out the reason. Every morning I wake up without my brother, it's not a fun day

house. He always made me

- Lonely Brother

Dear Brother: It's tough when a sibling leaves home, but there are ways to adjust.

Invite some friends over after school to play games, watch TV, whatever. Your brother isn't so far away that you can't IM or call and before you know it, he'll be home to visit. This is your chance to be the center of attention. Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, Iongtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox/ecomcast.net or write to: Annie's Mailbox, comcast.net or write to: Annie's Mailbox, Coreators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd, Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



"... And thy grandmother."









SCOREBOARD

AFN TV & Radio

Tuesday

AFN-Sports, 6:30 a.m.-High school basket-ball: Jam Fest (Slam Dunk, Three-Point, and Feam Ball Finals) (dll). AFN-Sports, 7:30 a.m.-College basketball: NCAN Women's Tournament Special (dld). AFN-Sports, 2:30 p.m.-NBA: Milwaukee at Miami (dll).

AFN-Sports, 6 p.m.-Outdoors: Wal-Mart FLW Tour (dld). FLW Tour (dld).

AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.-Baseball: Spring Train-ing, L.A. Angels vs. Chicago White Sox.

Wednesday

AFN-Sports and Radio, 1 a.m.-College basketball: NCAA Tournament Play-In Game.
AFN-Atlantic, 1 a.m.-College basketball: NIT first-round name IT first-round game. AFN-Sports, 3 a.m.-College baskeball: NIT rst-round game. AFN-Atlantic, 3 a.m.-Motor racing: Champi-nship Off-Road Racing, Topeka Races 2 and

3 (both did).
ARN-Sports, 6:30 a.m.-Outdoors: Babe
Winkelman's Good Fishing (did).
ARN-Sports, noon-NBA: Minnesota at Dallas (did).
ARN-Sports, 5:30 p.m.-Auto racing: Nextel
Cup UAV-Daimler Chrysler 400 (did).
ARN-Sports, 9 p.m.-Tennis: Pacific Life
Open, women's quarterfinals.

All times are Central European Time; dld in dicates delayed listing. All listings are sub-ject to change. Visit www.myafn.net for more information.

Baseball

Spring training glance AMERICAN LEAGUE

Pct. .700 .667 .667 .625 .500 .444 .417 .400 .400 Cleveland Los Angeles Tampa Bay Toronto Detroit Baltimore Boston Chicago Kansas City Texas Minnesota Oakland .333 8 NATIONAL LEAGUE Pct. .750 .727 .667 Colorado San Francisco .636 .600 .545 Arizona Chicago New York Pittsburgh Washington Cincinnati Los Angeles Philadelphia .545 .500 .500 .500 .454 .400 .364 .364 .333 Florida San Diego

San Diego
Houston
NOTE: Split-squad games co
standings; games against non-m
teams do not. Saturday's games
Minnesota 4, Toronto 1
Tampa Bay 6, Boston 4
Washington 6, Florida 3
Detroit 4, Atlanta (ss) 3
Houston 7, Cleveland 3
L.A. Dodgers (ss) 0, Baltimore
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Fla. Florida vs. L.A. Dodgers at Vero Beach, Fla. Cleveland vs. Cincinnati at Sarasota, Fla. Toronto vs. Tampa Bay at St. Petersburg,

Fla. Atlanta vs. St. Louis (ss) at Jupiter, Fla. Baitimore (ss) vs. Washington at Viera

Fla. Pittsburgh vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Pittsburgri vs. Frinado.,..... Fla. St. Louis (ss) vs. Baltimore (ss) at Fort Lau-derdale, Fla.

Seattle vs. Texas at Surprise, Ariz. Chicago Cubs vs. LA. Angels at Tempe, Ariz.

riz.

Oakland (ss) vs. San Diego at Peoria, Ariz.
Arizona (ss) vs. Milwaukee at Phoenix
Colorado vs. Chicago White Sox at Tucson,

Ariz. Arizona (ss) vs. Oakland (ss) at Phoenix Kansas City vs. San Francisco at Scotts-

College baseball

Saturday's scores

EAST Canisius 5-5, UMBC 4-6 Delaware St. 6-6, Binghamton 3-3 George Mason 8-7, Fairfield 2-2 Stonehill 20, Post, Conn. 0 Stony Brook 5-8, Delaware 3-0 Vermont 6-5, George Washington 4-4

SOUTH
Alabama St. 14-7, Jackson St. 9-36
Army 13, Columbia 0
Auburn 12, VMI 0

Alabama S., 1.47., Jackson St. 9-36 Auburn 12, Villa Auburn 12, Villa Auburn 12, Villa Auburn 12, Villa Belmont 5-11, Bockford 92-31, Auturn Call St.-Villatford 93-31, Auturn Call St.-Villatford 93-31, Auturn Call St.-Villatford 93-31, Auturn Call St.-Villatford 93-31, Auturn Charlotte 18, Duquesno 93-31, Auturn Charlotte 19, Auturn Charlotte 19

Loydon 7, 45 Usakaro Ansas 13-11
East Carolina 67, Navy 5-4
Ernmännel 6-1, Berry 5-1
Ernmännel 6-1, Augrider Weigb 2
Florida Altamic 4, Gardiner Weigb 2
Fordham 12, Old Dominion 8
Fordham 17, Box 1
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East Central 13-7, Angelo St. 8-8
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Illinois 4, Texas-Paning 10-10
Illinois 4, Texas-Arlington 2
Illinois 4, Texas-San Arlinois 5-2
Oklahoma 15, Northwestern St. 8
Oklahoma St. 20, WS. Alliwauker 3
Oklahoma St. 20, WS. Alliwauk

Oral Roberts 5, Texas-San Antonio 4 Prairie View 9-16, Grambling St. 7-5 Rice 15, TCU 5 SE Oklahoma 5t. 2-6, E. New Mexico 1-2 Texas 8, Purdue 6 Texas-Dallas 15-2, LeTourneau 7-1 Texas State 16, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi

FAR WEST Arizona 7, Mississippi St. 3

Arizona 7, Mississippi St. 3 Brigham Young 22, New Mi Brown 7, Santa Clara 5 Hawaii 9, Florida St. 6 Long Beach St. 5, Houston

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Auto racing

Sam's Town 300

NASCAR Busch Series
At Las Vegsaturday Speedway
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61,220. 3. (21) David Stremme, Dodge, 200, \$62,983. 4. (28) Joe Nemechek, Chevrolet, 200, 4. (28) JUB MEIRELIES, 0.5.1.05. 5. (10) Greg Biffle, Ford, 200, \$31,025. 6. (7) Reed Sorenson, Dodge, 200, \$35,275. 7. (1) Carl Edwards, Ford, 200, \$32,025. 8. (43) Randy Lalole, Chevrolet, 200, \$30,175.

\$30,175.

9. (5) Clint Bowyer, Chevrolet, 200, \$39,715.
10. (13) David Green, Ford, 200, \$34,255.
11. (3) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 200, \$31,105,12.
12. (18) Denny Hamlin, Chevrolet, 200, \$31,350.

\$31,350. 13. (27) Justin Labonte, Chevrolet, 200, 13. (21) JUSUIT LADOTIC, S.1. 34,838, 14. (2) Elliott Sadler, Ford, 200, \$22,790. 15. (19) Tim Fedewa, Dodge, 199, \$28,810. 16. (20) Martin Truex Jr., Chevrolet, 199,

\$34,550.
17. (22) Jon Wood, Ford, 199, \$24,160.
18. (9) J.J. Yeley, Chevrolet, 199, \$27,730.
19. (33) Dave Blaney, Chevrolet, 199, \$21,915.
20. (8) Kasey Kahne, Dodge, 199, \$22,655.
21. (30) Scott Riggs, Chevrolet, 199,

\$21,695. 22. (23) Ashton Lewis Jr., Ford, 199, \$32,790. 23. (14) Kenny Wallace, Ford, 199, \$27,488. 24. (29) Jeremy Mayfield, Dodge, 199, \$21,340. (17) Sterling Marlin, Dodge, 199,

 (1/) Sterling Marin, Dodge, 199,
 (21,205.
 (35) Stanton Barrett, Chevrolet, 198,
 (33,195. 573,195.
271, (24) Aaron Fike, Dodge, 197, \$20,965.
28. (26) Johnny Sauter, Dodge, 197, \$23,355.
28. (26) Johnny Sauter, Dodge, 197, \$23,359.
30. (15) Paul Wolfe, Dodge, 197, \$20,830.
31. (37) Shawnar Robinson, Chevrolet, 196, \$22,670.

\$20,360, 33. (32) Tony Raines, Chevrolet, 196,

\$20,250.y naurts, Cnevrolet, 196, 34 (40) Derrike Cope, Ford, 191, \$24,670. 35 (39) Eric Norris, Chevrolet, 199, \$22,040. 36 (4) Shane Hmiel, Chevrolet, 148, transmission, \$22,00. 37 (11) Paul Menard, Chevrolet, 144, accident, \$22,480. 38 (16) Stacy Compton, Ford, 113, accident, \$22,480.

nent, \$24,455.
39. (42) Kim Crosby, Chevrolet, 76, accient, \$19,895.
40. (31) Michel Jourdain Jr., Ford, 53, accient, \$27,360. dent, \$27,360. 41. (41) Steve Grissom, Ford, 50, engine fail-ure, \$24,325. 42. (36) Kertus Davis, Chevrolet, 48, engine failure, \$21,765.

43. (6) Jason Keller, Ford, 41, engine failure, \$24,259.

Race Statistics
Winner's Average Speed: 122.158 mph

YOU'RE AFRAID OF YOUR MEMBERS

LOGING THEIR RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Time of Race: 2 hours, 27 minutes, 21 sec-

D.Stremme 186-191; M.Martin 192-200. Point Standings: 1, K.Harvick, 690; 2, C.Ed-wards, 610; 3, C.Bowyer, 571; 4, R.Sorenson, 564; 5, M.Truex Jr., 538; 6, A.Lewis Jr., 494; 7, D.Stremme, 452; 8, S.Hmiel, 431; 9, J.Labonte, 427; 10, D.Hamlin, 418.

Tennis

Pacific Life Open

At The Indian Wells Tennis Garden Indian Wells, Calif. Purse: Men, \$2,724,600 (Masters); Women, \$2,1 million (Tier I) Surface: Hard-Outdoor

Men First Round Mardy Fish, United States, def. Jan-Micha-el Gambill, United States, 6-2, 6-2. Cyrll Saulnier, France, def. Victor Hanescu, Romania, 6-2, 6-2. Jan Henrych, Czech Republic, def. Ramon Jan Hernych, Czech Republic, def. Ramon Delgado, Paraguay, 6-2, 6-4 Robby Ginepri, United States, def. Jose Acasuso, Argentina, 7-5, 7-6 (5).

United States, oet. Jose Acassiso, Argennus, United States, Oet. Jose Acassiso, Argennus, Gilles Muller, Lemembourg, def. Asan-Rene Lisraud, Frances, 6-7, 2000.

Gilles Muller, Lemembourg, def. Asex Calarizes, Soain, 6-3, 6-6, 6-10, def. Davide San-Jurietti, Italy, 6-3, 6-2, oet., def. Cale Morton Commy Retereof 2017, Soain, def. Gael Morton Commy Retereof 2018, Gaestin, def. Gael Morton Commy Retereof 2018, Gaestin, def. Gaestin, def.

Tim Henman (6), Britain, def. Amaud Clem-ent. France, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

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Pennetta (15), Italy, 7-6 (4), 4-6, 5-3. Jill Craybas, United States, def. Elena Likhovtseva (10), Russla, 6-1, 6-4. Kathalie Devit, (7), France, def. Emille Loit, France, 2-6, 6-1, United States, def. Daja Bedanova, Crebe Republic, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-2. Mary Pierce (20), France, def. Ludmila Cer-anova, Slovakia, 2-6, 6-1, 7-5. Daniela Hantuchova (13), Slovakia, def. Anne Kremer, Lucembourg, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5.

STRINGENT

A CITENISCHIT

Golf

Oatar Masters

At Doha Golf Course
Doha, Qatar
Purse: \$1.5 million
Vardage: (7.31; Par 7-28
Henrik Stenson, Sweden
Richard Green, Aurel
Rights Sweden
Richard Green, Aurel
Rights Kinner
Richard Green, Aurel
Richard Pierre Fulke, Sweden Richard Green, Australia James Kingston, S. Africa Robert Karlsson, Sweden Barry Lane, England Louis Oosthulzen, S. Africa Raphael Jacquelin, France Gregory Harvett, France Steve Webster, England

73-69-69-65-276
67-73-66-71-277
67-73-66-71-277
70-72-69-89-280
69-67-74-70-280
71-69-69-71-280
70-68-73-70-281
70-68-73-70-281
73-69-69-71-280
73-69-69-71-282
73-70-71-68-283

Honda Classic

Saturday At The Country Club at Mirasol, Sunrise Course Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. Purse: \$5.5 million Yardage: 7,384; Par: 72 Third Round

73-67-64-204 -12 66-66-72-204 -12 69-69-67-205 -11 Lee Janzen Joe Ogilvie Fred Couples 69-64-72-205 73-66-67-206 73-69-66-208 Robert Damro David Toms Kevin Stadler 70-65-73-208 71-71-67-209 71-70-68-209 Sean O'Hair Mark Hensby Charlie Wi 69-72-68-209 73-71-66-210 69-71-70-210 Vijay Singh Tim Herron Jim Furyk Brian Bateman Tim Clark Daniel Chonra 70-69-71-210 73-66-71-210 70-68-72-210 Brett Quigley Nick Watney John Cook Greg Owen Padraig Harrington Marco Dawson. Justin Leonard Billy Mayfair Ryan Palmer Jesper Parnevik Robert Allenby Brian Gay Brian Gay Hidemichi Tanaka Jay Williamson Justin Rose 73-69-70-212 73-68-71-212 69-72-71-212 Brad Faxon Scott McCarron 69-71-72-212 72-68-72-212 69-71-72-212 Aaron Baddele Andrew Magee

> 70-70-73-213 -3 69-69-75-213 -3 **SBC Classic**

71-70-72-213 75-65-73-213 70-70-73-213

Doug Barron Tommy Armour III Joe Durant

At Valencia Country Club Santa Clarita, Calif. Purse: \$1.55 million Yardage: 6,905; Par: 72 Second Round

Keith Fergus Mark McNulty Gary McCord D.A. Weibring Mike Reid Isao Antel 72-65-137 72-66-138 74-66-140 71-69-140 70-71-141 69-73-142 73-70-143 72-71-143 71-72-143 71-72-143 71-72-143 Isao Aoki Lanny Wadkins Don Pooley Des Smyth Bob Gilder Bob Gilder Wayne Levi Vance Heafner Tom McKnight Morris Hatalsky Craig Stadler Tom Purtzer Don Reese Allen Doyle Howard Twitty Dana Quigley Andy Bean Hajime Meshlai

76-68-144 74-70-144 74-70-144 74-70-144 73-71-144 72-72-144 72-73-145 72-73-145 77-69-146 77-69-146 77-69-146 76-70 - 146
75-71 - 146
74-72 - 146
73-73 - 146
73-73 - 146
72-74 - 146
77-70 - 147
76-71 - 147
75-72 - 147
74-73 - 147
73-74 - 147

Deals

rry Pate raham Marsh cente Fernan

Saturday's transactions

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS—Placed G Nick
an Exel on the injured list. Signed G Mau-

Van Exel on the injured list. Signed G Mau-rice Baker to a 10-day contract. FOOTBALL National Football League DETROIT LIONS—Agreed to terms with QB Jeff Garcia on a one-year contract. MINNESOTA VIKINGS—Signed S Darren Sharper to a four-year contract.

OAKLAND RAIDERS — Signed DE Derrick Bur-

TANK McNamara



WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT A DECLINE IN HOME-RUN PRODUCTION.





Texas Rangers second baseman Alfonso Soriano, who hit .280 with 28 homers last season, is 0-for-16 in exhibition games this spring.

Soriano struggling after lost offseason

Rangers 2B off to slow start in spring training because of recovery from left hamstring injury By STEPHEN HAWKINS

The Associated Press

SURPRISE, Ariz. - While Alfonso Soriano is at ease in the Texas Rangers' clubhouse this spring, he's off to a slow start on the field

Soriano had to overcome the shock last spring of being unexpectedly traded from the New York Yankees in the Alex Rodriguez deal. This year, he's coming off a lost offseason because of a left hamstring injury.

"I have my winter in the Dominican, I do nothing, just think about my leg," Soriano said Friday. "Just nothing. I was running like three days, got scared, so I said I'm going to stop because I don't want to hurt myself."

So there were no running and no workouts for the All-Star second baseman until just before he arrived in Arizona for spring training 31/2 weeks ago

After being held out of the first two exhibition games, Soriano is hitless in his first 16 at-bats with eight strikeouts in five games. He went 0-for-3 with a strikeout in a 6-4 loss to the Los Angeles Angels on Friday when he also made his first error

"I'm not worried about it, because it's more important for me to try to be healthy and think about my leg," Soriano said. "I have plenty of time, three more weeks. I have plenty of time to get ready. ... I feel so great, I'm running every day."

Soriano missed the final 16 games last season after being hurt Sept. 16 as he stole third base against Oakland

The team called the injury a strained hamstring, and it didn't require surgery.

Despite the slow start this spring, Soriano says he's not in pain. He insists that he'll be 100 percent by the season opener April 5 at the Los Angeles Angels.

The Rangers have no reason to

"I'd be concerned if he was having any pain," manager Buck Showalter said. "When he's through in the game, plays five or six inning ... he's running hard full speed down the line. It's more just kind of mentally getting over it, and getting over any residual effects of it '

Soriano wants to play every day, while Showalter is trying to rest his regulars a couple games a

That may be exactly what Soriano needs to getting going offensively. He hit .280 with 28 home runs and 91 RBIs last season

"I don't know if he's behind. He was the same way last year," hit-ting coach Rudy Jaramillo said. "He just has to keep swinging, get his timing down and go from there. He doesn't look maybe like he's canable but it's just timing

At least Soriano is beyond adjusting to a new team in last place. Last spring, he suddenly went from a World Series team to one coming off four last-place finishes - before its improbable nennant chase.

"I feel now a big difference this year," Soriano said. "Last year, I came in a new guy, like a rookie. I now know the players, and we played together last year. I feel more comfortable."

'Lights out Lidge,' ready for follow-up

Reliever was surprise for Astros during playoff run

BY JOEL ANDERSON The Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. - Maybe if Carlos Beltran had never come to Houston and Octavio Dotel had never gone to Oakland, Brad Lidge would still be just another promising reliever in the Astros' bullnen. But with the Astros bumbling

their way through a season that started with World Series expectations, Houston managed to pull off a three-team trade that landed Beltran and sent Dotel to the A's During the ensuing playoff

push that got Houston within a victory of its first World Series. Lidge turned an unexpected audition for the closer's role into a four-month showcase for one of the best young pitchers in the majors. He converted 29 of 33 save attempts during the regular season and was even better in the postseason, earning himself the nickname "Lights Out Lidge." The question now is whether

Lidge can do it for an entire sea-

"When you strike out the world and close out the last three months of the season for us, you're not going to sneak up on anybody," Astros manager Phil Garner said, "All the teams know what he can do."

When then-general manager Gerry Hunsicker decided to swing the trade for Beltran last June 24, it was a huge gamble. Beltran was a free agent who would be seeking lots of money once the season was over, and dealing Dotel to Oakland would mean the unproven — and often injured — Lidge would become Houston's closer.

Hunsicker pulled the trigger on the trade anyway, a last-ditch effort to rescue the season of a team seemingly headed to a disappointing finish.

Good move, it turned out, Lidge might have been as good, if not better than, Beltran down the stretch.

"Beltran was already considered a great player." Garner said. "but not too many people knew about Brad until the playoffs. Then they knew?

He led the majors with 17 saves after Aug. 15, and set an NL record for strikeouts by a reliever with 157. And once he was in the playoffs, Lidge took his game a step further, finishing with an ERA of 0.73 and 20 strikeouts fourth most ever in the playoffs



Houston Astros pitcher Brad Lidge converted 29 of 33 save attempts during the regular season in 2004, and was even better in the postseason, finishing with an ERA of 0.73 and 20 strikeouts in 121/3 innings.

44 When you strike out

the world and close

out the last three

months of the

season for us.

you're not going to

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Phil Garner

Astros manager

- during an amazing 12 1/3 -inning run of dominance.

Against St. Louis in the NL championship series, Lidge pitched an NL-record eight score-less innings against a team that led the league in runs scored. The Cardinals finished with only one hit and struck

against Lidge. It was offi-

cial: at just 27 and in his fourth month as a closer, Lidge merited comparison to his trio of idols Mariano Rivera, and Billy Wagner. "I'm just humbled by

everything

han pened to me," Lidge said. "I can remember those games like they were vesterday.'

Lidge, 28, has only seemingly come a long way in a short amount of time. His road to the majors was repeatedly hindered by injuries and a deep pool of pitching talent in the Astros' organization

"Brad always had the talent," said Wagner, a three-time All-Star who was the closer in Houston from 1995-2003 before

being traded to Philadelphia. "He's always had better overall stuff than anybody we've had or developed. He could throw things that most of us couldn't even get away with."

With a fastball that reached into the high 90s and a knee-buckling slider

Lidge had the kind of potential him to make

climb through the minors de spite the setbacks.

steady

Until his first full year in the majors 2003 Lidge had every season ended pre-maturely by injuries: his

right elbow in '98, right knee in '99, right elbow again in '00, right shoulder in '01 and a strained left muscle in his rib cage in '02.

Lidge had never pitched in relief until the 2003 season, when he was part of a strong bullpen that included himself, Dotel and Wagner, He went 6-3 with a 3.60 ERA, tied a club rookie record for games pitched in a season (78) and tied for fourth in the majors with 97 strikeouts.

Wells makes first start for Red Sox

David Wells made his Boston debut and began looking ahead to Opening Day.

Andy Pettitte is still waiting to

make his first start of spring train-

ing.
Wells worked two solid innings during the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' 6-4 victory over the Red Sox on Saturday, then said he'd be happy to start opening night April 3 against his former team, the New York Yankees, if Curt Schilling isn't yet recovered from offseason ankle surgery.

"I don't mind taking the ball in any game no matter what, espe cially a big game, and the first game of the season is going to be a big game," said Wells, who now wears No. 3, the same number one of his favorite players, Babe Ruth wore with the Vankees

Pettitte was scratched from his scheduled start for Houston because of a sprained right ankle after falling down stairs at his apartment Friday.

"He's feeling pretty good today and it is not as swollen as we thought it would be." Houston manager Phil Garner said.

Pettitte tested the ankle in a brief session at the Astros' camp Saturday morning. 32-year-old left-hander is trying to rebound from an inju-ry-plagued 2004 season that included three trips to the disabled list because of elbow problems.

"He probably could have gone a little longer, but we didn't want to push it," Garner said. "We'll give him another bullpen session on Tuesday and maybe nitch him in a game later in the week

After going through rehab for the past eight months, Pettitte nitched three innings in a simulated game Tuesday.

Tim Redding replaced Pettitte and struck out six in four score-less innings to help Houston defeat the Cleveland Indians 7-3 in Winter Haven, Fla.

At Fort Myers Fla the

Spring training

41-year-old Wells allowed four hits, one earned run and a wild pitch. He had no walks or strikeouts while throwing 28 pitches, 20 for strikes.

"My only job here is to go in here and win with the Boston Red Sox and try to give them quality innings and try to bring another championship to Boston," Wells

B.J. Upton hit a solo homer for Tampa Bay. David Ortiz hit a three-run homer and Trot Nixon added a solo shot for Boston. In other games

Yankees 5, Phillies (ss) 2: At Tampa, Fla., Hideki Matsui hit a grand slam and Jaret Wright alowed three hits in three scoreless innings.

Twins 4. Blue Javs 1: At Dune din. Fla., Carlos Silva threw four strong innings for Minnesota

Nationals 6. Marlins 3: At Jupiter. Fla., Josh Beckett turned in the finest performance by any Florida starter this spring, allowing four hits and one unearned run in six innings.

Tigers 4, Braves (ss) 3: At Kissimmee, Fla., Tim Hudson became the first Atlanta starter to give up a run this spring, allowing a homer to Carlos Pena.

Dodgers (ss) 0, Orioles 0 (10): At Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Sidney Ponson pitched four strong in-nings in his first spring start after his debut was delayed by a court case back home in Aruba.

Mets 5, Dodgers 5 (11): At Vero Beach, Fla., Kazuhisa Ishii made a strong case to rejoin Los Angeles' rotation, allowing one hit over four innings in his first start of the spring.

Phillies (ss) 10. Braves (ss) 9 (10): At Clearwater, Fla., Jim Thome hit a pair of two-run shots and Placido Polanco also hom-



Boston Red Sox pitcher David Wells delivers to Tampa Bay Devil Rays' Delmon Young during the first inning in Fort Myers, Fla., on Saturday.

ered for Philadelphia. Andy Marte homered twice for Atlanta, and Rafael Furcal also homered

Pirates (ss) 13. Reds (ss) 2: At Sarasota, Fla., Ty Wigginton went 4-for-5 with two RBIs and Ben Grieve drove in four runs for Pittsburgh.

Pirates (ss) 15, Reds (ss) 12: At Bradenton, Fla., All-Star shortstop Jack Wilson went 0-for-2 in his first spring start for the Pirates but turned in several impressive defensive plays.

Mets (ss) 3, Cardinals 2: At Port St. Lucie, Fla., Matt Morris pitched two strong innings in his spring debut following offseason shoulder surgery, but Tom Glavine tossed four innings of no-hit ball for New York, Carlos Beltran hit his second homer for the Mets, and David Wright had a two-run double.

Giants (ss) 2, Royals 1: At Surprise, Ariz., Kansas City closer Jeremy Affeldt left with a strained left groin.

"It's not that serious," Royals manager Tony Pena said. "We don't want to take any chances. I did not hesitate to take him out."

Noah Lowry pitched 32/3 scoreless innings, allowing three hits and striking out five for the win.

Athletics 7, White Sox 6: At Phoenix, Eric Chavez hit a three-run shot for his first home run of the spring for Oakland. Carl Everett hit his third homer and a two-run single for the

Diamondbacks 4, Padres 3: At Tucson, Ariz., Alex Cintron went 4-for-4 with two doubles and Arizona got 10 hits off San Diego starter Adam Eaton.

Angels (ss) 8, Cubs 3: At Mesa, Ariz., Nomar Garciaparra homered, doubled and went 3-for-3 for the Cubs. Garret Anderson hit a two-run homer off Greg Maddux for the Angels. Maddux gave up six hits and two runs in four innings

Giants (ss) 7, Angels (ss) 4: At Scottsdale, Ariz., Michael Tucker doubled twice and drove in two for the Giants, and Lou Merloni hit his second triple and drove in two runs for the Angels.

Mariners 8, Rangers 3: At Peoria, Ariz., Raul Ibanez went 3-for-4 with an RBI and left-hander Bobby Madritsch pitched three hitless innings for Seattle.

Brewers 17, Rockies 9: At Tucson, Ariz., Wes Helms hit two home runs and the Milwaukee Brewers pounded out 20 hits against Colorado.

Report: Jeremy Giambi admits to steroid use

KANSAS CITY Mo - Former

major leaguer Jeremy Giambi, who played one injury-plagued season for the Boston Red Sox, admitted he used steroids, The Kansas City Star reported Sunday.

"It's something I did," Giambi told the newspaper. "I apologize. I made a mistake, I moved on, I kind of want it in the past. Giambi, the younger brother of

Yankees star Jason Giambi, signed a minor league contract with the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday

Jeremy Giambi broke into the big leagues in 1998 with Kansas City, then played with his brother in Oakland from 2000-01.

Jason Giambi won the AL MVP Award in 2000, and his younger brother had his best season the next year, hitting .283 with 12 homers and 57 RBIs in 371

The younger Giambi has also played for Philadelphia.

His last stint in the majors was in 2003, when he batted .197 in 127 at hats with the Red Soy He missed most of last season with a herniated disc. Signed by the Dodgers, he didn't play in a big ague game

While he did not specifically say his brother used steroids, Jeremy Giambi noted a news conference his brother had last month in New York during which he apologized profusely, but did not say why he was apologizing.

"If you don't know what he's apologizing for," Jeremy Giambi said, "you must've been in a coma for two years

Jeremy Giambi declined to be specific about his steroid use. He told the newspaper he wants to come clean about steroids and hones others will do the same

"They're not good for you," the vounger Giambi said. "I think we need to reach out and let teenagers know they're not good for your body and not good for your

It was the elder Giambi who introduced his brother to steroids. according to a transcript of the BALCO grand jury proceedings, the San Francisco Chronicle renorted. When he testified before the grand jury, Jeremy Giambi said he used steroids in cream and liquid form and injected human growth hormone and testosterone

The Yankees on Saturday declined a request by the Star to interview Jason Giambi.

In January, baseball adopted a harsher steroid-testing policy.

"Baseball has taken a step forward," the younger Giambi said.

"People need to realize that and let it work. I wouldn't want to be the first one to get caught. It might be worse than a murder

Selig unhappy about congressional hearing

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS

The Associated Press

PEORIA Ariz - Commission er Bud Selig is unhappy about the upcoming congressional hearing on steroids because he thinks baseball has already adopted a strong testing program. The House Government Re-

form Committee has subpoenaed seven current or former players and four baseball executives to testify at a hearing March 17. The commissioner's office has said it will fight the subpoenas

"I am very protective of the players, and there has to be a sense of fairness," Selig said Saturday. "If I sound a bit elevated, it is for that reason. We made agreements and we are doing the things we promised to do."



asked of the players who were subpoenaed. When asked what he felt the motivation was, he de-

he's not sure

what will be

ferred "T'11

you all make that judgment," Selig told reporters during the Seattle Mariners' spring training game against the Texas Rangers.

Under pressure from Congress, baseball and its players agreed in January to a tougher steroid-testing program that added penalties for first-time offenders (10-day suspensions) and random, vear-round tests. 'It's an evolving policy. When

we went to testing, it was called weak and toothless," Selig said. "But we started at 7 percent [testing positive], now we're down to 1-2 percent. I believe while this policy isn't exactly what I want, it's the best that could be done in collective bargaining.

"I'm comfortable and very confident in telling you that we will really reduce the usage

The previous policy called only for treatment after a first positive test. No player was suspended for steroid use in 2004, the first season of testing with penalties.

The players subpoenaed for eek's hearing are former stars Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco and current players Jason Giambi, Sammy Sosa, Curt Schilling, Frank Thomas and Rafael Palmeiro. Selig said he wasn't sure about

any attempts by baseball officials to negotiate a deal with Congress that would excuse the players from testifying.

The commissioner, who ad-dressed a Senate panel about steroids last year, was not subpoe-naed, but said he was willing to attend the hearings

"I'll do whatever is in the best interest of the sport, and if I believe that's it, you bet I'll be

there," he said. Players' association

Donald Fehr, Major League Baseball executive vice presidents Rob Manfred and Sandy Alderson, and San Diego Padres general manager Kevin Towers have been called to appear.

Nuggets, Lakers rally to win

Carmelo Anthony came out of his shooting slump when it count-

ed Kobe Bryant took over the fourth quarter for the Los Ange-

les Lakers, as well. Anthony's Denver Nuggets and Bryant's Lakers both won Saturday night to remain tied for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

In San Antonio, Anthony made a 14-foot jumper and added two free throws in the final 2 minutes as Denver rallied for its eighth straight victory, 90-87 over the

Spurs The basket was only the fourth in 17 attempts in the game for Anthony. Of his 13 misses, 11 came from 5 feet or closer.

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"I was missing shots around the rim, so I tried to find open looks get free in the onen court draw some fouls and get some re-

bounds," Anthony said. He finished with 21 points, 12 coming on free throws, and four of his six rebounds were on the offensive end.

The Nuggets trailed 79-70 with about 9 minutes left after Devin Brown made two three-pointers and Beno Udrih added another for the Spurs, who played without Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili

for a second straight game Denver chipped away at the

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fense bogged down, and the Nuggets finished by scoring the game's final 10 points.

The Spurs' last points of the game came on a corner jumper by Tony Parker with 3:29 left that made the score 87-80.

"I told my guys that they couldn't let them (the Spurs) score any more baskets if they hoped to get out of this one with a win," Denver coach George Karl said. "Yes, there was no Duncan out there, but I don't care what

you say, this is a big win." Duncan has a sprained right ankle, and Ginobili a slight groin

In Charlotte, Bryant capped his 21-point fourth quarter with a long jumper with 0.9 seconds left to lift Los Angeles over the Bobcats and give the Lakers consecutive road victories for ther first time this season.

Bryant finished with 32 points and nine assists for the Lakers, who trailed much of the way against the expansion Bobcats.

After struggling to 11 points on 4-for-12 shooting through three periods, Bryant hit six straight shots — including three three-pointers — and the deficit was down to 110-108 after his iumper over Keith Bogans with 2:45 left in the game.

Then, after closing to 116-115 on a tip-in by Jumaine Jones with 31 seconds left, the Lakers got the ball back with the chance to win it. Bryant did the rest, taking the ball near midcourt and dribbling toward the top of the key. He nump-faked, sending Bogans into the air, and rose above the Bob cats' guard to launch the shot.

The ball swished through the net, stunning the crowd.

Heat 90, Nets 65: Eddie Jones scored 14 of his 18 points in a decisive third quarter to help Miami win its eighth straight game and 12th in a row at home.

Shaquille O'Neal had 15 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat who allowed their lowest point total of the season Vince Carter scored 20 for the

Nets, who managed just 26 points in the second half and lost for the fourth time in five games.

Warriors 105, Hawks 92: Mike Dunleavy and Jason Rich-ardson each scored 22 points and visiting Golden State set a team

record with 18 three-pointers.

Dunleavy was 6-for-7 from
three-point range and Baron Davis went 6-for-10 and scored 20 points. The Warriors, 18-for-33 overall on threes, became the fifth team to fall one shy of the NBA record set by Atlant against Dallas on Dec. 17, 1996.

Hornets 111, Bucks 107: J.R. Smith made three free throws in the final 4 seconds and finished with 16 points to lead New Orleans at home. Dan Dickau led the Hornets

with 17 points, P.J. Brown had 16 oints and 13 rebounds, and Lee Nailon also had 16 points

Trail Blazers 80, Grizzlies 66: At Portland, Ore., Shareef Abdur-Rahim had 25 points and 10 rebounds to help give Kevin Pritchard his first victory as Port-

land's interim coach. Pritchard, the team's director of player personnel, lost his first four games after taking over the Blazers foll Cheeks' firing. following Maurice

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

x-Miami x-Detroit x-Boston Washington Chicago Cleveland Indiana	W 48 37 33 33 32 32 32	L 16 23 29 26 27 27 27	Pct .750 .617 .532 .559 .542 .542 .542	GB 9 14 12½ 13½ 13½ 15½	
Orlando Philadelphia New York	31	30	.508 .484 .433	15½ 17 20	
New York New Jersey Toronto	26 27 26	34 36	.429	201/2	

Western Conference

x-Phoenix x-San Antonio x-Seattle Dallas Sacramento Houston Memphis Denver	35	15 19 21 24 25 27 29	.758 .758 .683 .656 .619 .590 .565 .525	5 6½ 8½ 10½ 12 14½
L.A. Lakers Minnesota L.A. Clippers Portland Utah Golden State New Orleans	32 27 23 20 20 14	29 31 35 37 41 43 47	.525 .508 .435 .383 .328 .317 .230	14½ 15½ 20 23 26½ 27½ 32½

W L Pct GR

Golden State 20 43 New Orleans 14 47 X-division leader Saturday's games Miami 90, New Jersey 65 Golden State 105, Atlanta 92 L.A. Lakers 117, Charlotte 116 New Orleans 111, Milwauke el Denver 90, San Antonio 87 Portland 80, Memphis 66 Sunday's games Dallas at Minnesota Moisten Charles

Dallas at Minnesota Houston at Sacramento Chicago at L.A. Clippers Utah at Detroit New Jersey at Orlando Washington at Boston Philadelphia at Toronto Seattle at New York Indiana at Cleveland Phoenix at Denver Hoenix at Denver Boston at Ch. March Carlot at Allanta Milwaukea at Miami

L.A. Lakers at Washington Detroit at Atlanta Milwaukee at Miami Portland at Memphis New Orleans at San Antonio Houston at Golden State Tuesday's games Tuesd.
Utah at Cleveland
L.A. Lakers at Phila
Miami at New York
Seattle at Chicago
Minnesota at Dalla
Orlando at Sacram

Sunday

Heat 90, Nets 65

Heat 90, Nets 65

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16 9-02, Krstis 64 8-412, (doil 3-10.12-17,
May 11-15-12, Ma

Warriors 105, Hawks 92

Warriors 1.U5, Hawks 92 GOLDEN STATE — Dunleay 7:15 2-2 22, Murphy 4-11 0-93, Foyle 3-96-96, Fisher 6-12, 9-15, Richardson 9-16-23-22, Davis 7-17 6-9 0-15, Richardson 9-16-23-22, Davis 7-17 6-9 0-15, Richardson 9-16-21, Richardson 9-16-21, Cabarlaga 8-1 0-90, Tskitishvill 0-2 0-9. 10-8 ATAWTA — 15mith 2-4 2-7, Burrington ATAWTA — 15mith 2-4 2-7, Burrington Fillerses 7-18-4 18, Prothipit 4-11 6-9 8, Gugliotta 5-8 2-2 12, Ivey 7-5 0-9 4, D.Smith 1-34-67, Diany 2-04 4, Caliller 3-90-4, Stewn 1-34-67, Diany 2-04 4, Caliller 3-90-4, Stewn

Childres J. 15: 84 1 (8, Dobuhia 4-11 6-8) (10-10) (10

Lakers 117, Bobcats 116

LA. LAKERS — Butler 6-8 2-4 14, Odom 3-7 2-29, Mihm 5-7 5-7 15, Atkins 9-18 2-2 26, Bry-ant 12-24 4-5 32, Grant 1-4 0-0 2, B.Cook 0-1 0-0 0, Brown 2-3 0-0 4, Jones 5-7 2-2 15, Wal-ton 0-0 0-0 0, Medvedenko 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 43-79 17-22 117.

3-79 17-22 117. **CHARLOTTE** — Smith 2-6 0-0 4, Okafor 13-22 -6 30, Brezze 4-9 0-0 8, Hart 3-8 1-2 7, Bogans -8 1-1 13, Robinson 0-0 0-0 0, Knight 6-12 -10 21, Ely 6-7 0-0 12, Kapono 2-5 4-4 9, Allen -1 0-0 0, Carroll 4-5 4-5 12. Totals 45-83 23-28

Three-Point Goals—L.A. Lakers 14-28 (At-kins 6-14, Bryant 4-6, Jones 3-5, Odom 1-1, B.Cook 9-1, Brown 9-1), Charlotte 3-9 (Both 2-1, Brown 9-1), Charlotte 3-9 (Both 2-1, Brown 9-1), Fouled Out.—None. Re-bounds—L.A. Lakers 24 (Odom 11), Charlotte 42 (Okafor 11), Assists—L.A. Lakers 29 (Bry-ant 9), Charlotte 31 (Knjoht 17), Total Fouls—L.A. Lakers 20, Charlotte 21, Techni-cials—Bryant, Knjoht, A.—23,13), (2,3,19).

Hornets 111. Bucks 107

MILWAUKEE — Mason 5-11 1-2 11, Jo.Smith 4-7 0-0 8, Gadzuric 3-6 4-4 10, M.Williams 6-11 5-6 19, Redd 9-24 9-10 29, Goldwire 5-7 0-0 14, Pachulia 0-0 0-0 0, Kukoc 3-7 2-3 8, Fizer 3-3 0-0 6, Strickland 0-1 2-2 2, Totals 38-77 23-27

NEW ORLEANS — Nallon 8-9 0-0 16, Vroman 5-7 0-0 10, Brown 6-9 4-4 16, Dickau 8-16 0-1 17, J.Smith 5-12 5-8 17, Nachbar 4-9 0-0 11, Claxton 1-6 1-23, Andersen 2-10 5-10 9, Jacob-sen 3-8 5-6 12. Totals 42-8 20-31 111. Milwaukee 22 30 21 34-107 New Orleans 2-45 Milwaukee 27 25 33 26-111

sen 3-8-5-12. Totals 42-85 70-31 111. Milwaukee 2 29 20 21 34—107 Milwaukee 2 20 20 21 34—107 Milwaukee 2 20 20 21 34—107 Milwaukee 3-20 (20 21 34)—107 Milwaukee 8-20 (20 21 34)—107 Milwaukee 20 (20 21 34)—107 Milwaukee

Nuggets 90, Spurs 87

Trail Blazers 80, Grizzlies 66

MEMPHIS — Battler 5-12 1-3 11, Cardinal 4-10-0-11, Wright 9-14 3-5 21, Miller 3-11 0-0 8, Williams 0-2 0-0 0, Posey 1-9 0-0 2, Watson 3-8 1-1 7, Tsakalidis 0-3 0-2 0, Emmett 0-0 0-0 0, Burks 1-3 2-2 4, Humphrey 1-2 0-0 2, Totals 27-74 7-13 6-7

o Bains 19 22 4, miniminely 12 00 2 10 cts.

PORTLAND — Miles 4-13 0-0 8,

PORTLAND — Miles 4-13 0-0 8,

Abdur-Rahim 9-19 6-8 25, Przybilla 4-6 4-6 12,

Outlaw 0-0-0 0, Teffair 3-8 1-2 7, Frahm 6-12

0-1 4, Ratiff 4-7 4-4 12, Khryapa 0-2 0-0 0,

Baiker 0-1 0-0 0, Sengi-Jin 1-2 0-0 2.

Totals 31-70 55-02 80.

NBS leaders Through March 12 Scoring

Iverson, Phil. Bryant, LAL Nowitzki, Dall. Stoudemire, Phoe. McGrady, Hou. James, Clev. Arenas, Wash. 415 511 594 446 1634 323 1504 312 1452 375 1450 301 1390 448 1421 262 1327 168 1218 301 1349 267 1297 403 1319 424 1115 279 1230 323 1262 e 533 542 466 471 484 491 477 524 474 537 430 444 328 474 25.9 25.5 24.0 23.7 22.9 22.6 22.5 22.4 22.3 21.9 21.6 58 57 57 58 60 58 54 60 58 63 62 61 52 James, Clev. Arenas, Wash. Allen, Sea. Wade, Mia. Redd, Mil. Richardson, G.S. O'Neal, Mia. Carter, N.J. Garnett, Minn. Pierce, Bos. Francis, Orl. Maggette, LAC Duncan, S.A. Marbury, N.Y.

O'Neal Mia O'Neal, Mia. Stoudemire, Phoe. Yao, Hou. Haslem, Mia. McDyess, Det. Blount, Bos. Patterson, Port.

Garnett, Minn. B. Wallace, Det. Duncan, S.A. Marion, Phoe. Okafor, Char. Odom, LAL O'Neal, Mia. K. Thomas, N.Y. Nowitzki, Dall. Howard, Orl.

206 121

AST AVG 641 11.4 380 8.4 500 8.3 367 7.8 432 7.7 431 7.6 428 7.1 412 6.9 418 6.9 60 47 56 57 60 61

FG FGA 524 883 .593 .567 .551 .541 .537 .532 .531

Nash, Phoe. Knight, Char. Marbury, N.Y. Kidd, N.J. Iverson, Phil. James, Clev. Wade, Mia. Alston, Tor. Francis, Orl.

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Edwards' flat allows Martin to add win 47

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS - Mark Martin moved into the lead when seemingly unstoppable Carl Edwards was sidelined by a flat tire, extending his record for Busch Series victories to 47 Saturday at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Martin picked up his second Busch win this season, following his victory at California two

Edwards, making just his sixth Busch start, shot away from the field after taking his first series pole and dominated for 125 of the 200 laps in the Sam's Town 300 until the right rear tire went down on lap 186, sending him spinning into the infield

"I had a little luck today. Carl Edwards was in a position to win that one," Martin said of his Roush Racing teammate. "I was just lucky to get into the front.

"He was just checked out. There wasn't much we could do

about it. That one just slipped through his fingers

Martin seized on Edwards' misfortune when his teammate's right rear tire failed.

"I knew Carl had a problem down the back stretch and I knew at that point the race could be on between [Stremme and me] As Martin swept to a 1.412-sec-

ond victory - about 14 car lengths - Kevin Harvick and David Stremme battled for second. Harvick passed on the last turn of the final lap and edged Stremme by the length of his

Joe Nemechek finished fourth and Greg Biffle fifth. Reed Sorenson was sixth, and Edwards worked his way up to seventh, despite the tire problems.

Stremme was handicapped in the late going by a cranky gearshift lever he had to hold while he was trying to steer the car around the 1.5-mile Las Vegas oval.

pretty hard driving one-handed around this slippery track," he said.



Bode Miller, left, and Anja Paerson show their World Cup overall trophies after the final event on Sunday

Paerson hangs on to overall title

Swede edges Kostelic by three points

BY ERICA BULMAN The Associated Press

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland - Sweden's Anja Paerson held off Croatia's Janica Kostelic to win the overall World Cup title Sunday in a competition that came down to the final skier in the final race of the season

"Janica and I were both standing there in the finish, and we weren't sure who was going to win," Paerson said. "That's the

way it ski racing should be.' Finland's Tanja Poutiainen, who already had clinched the slalom championship, captured the

giant slalom title Spain's Marie Jose Rienda Contreras the last skier of the day won the final giant slalom in 2

minutes, 20.18 seconds. Poutiainen was second in 2:20.48, and Nicole Hosp of Austria was third in 2:20.69 Paerson won the championship

by three points after entering the race with a 35-point lead over Kostelic in the overall standings. She would have automatically

won the title by finishing ahead of

score points.

the Croat. But Kostelic was eighth and Paerson 17th. Kostelic and Paerson hugged

after the race, and then Kostelic kissed her Swedish rival on the cheek before pushing her into the center of the finish area

"Maybe we're not best friends. but we appreciate each other as skiers," Paerson said. "I admire her. We're both great skiers.

The Swede seemed on track to retain her overall title in the opening leg, finishing ahead of Kostelic but things got tricky for Paerson in the second run.

Kostelic managed strong performance in the second leg, crossing fourth. Paerson, running next, was uncharacteristically slow in her favorite discipline. finishing just within the points in 13th place with four racers to go.

Kostelic could have secured the title by finishing seventh or higher as long Paerson fell out of the top 15. At the World Cup finals, only the top 15 finishers

With one skier left. Kostelic was seventh and Paerson was al-

third in the second. Alois Vogl of Germany was sec-ond in 1:23.54 and Rainer Schoenfelder of Austria was third in 1:23.55.

Miller finished in sixth place. He was 13th after a mistake in the opening leg but delivered a blistering second run.

ready out of the top 15. But Rien-

da Contreras delivered a sizzling

final run - overcoming a mistake

where she went wide - to win the

race and give Paerson the overall

title by bumping Kostelic to

with 1,359 overall points, fol-lowed by Kostelic with 1,356.

day, Austria's Mario Matt won the slalom - his first victory in

more than four years - and

newly crowned overall champion Bode Miller completed a slalom

for just the second time this sea-

Matt, the 2001 world champion,

maintained his lead from the first

run to complete the sun-drenched

course in a combined time of 1

minute, 22.81 seconds. He was fastest in the opening run and

In the men's final event on Sun-

Paerson finished the season

eighth.

Vikings sign ex-Packer Sharper

MINNEAPOLIS - The Minnesota Vikings signed veteran safety Darren Sharper to a four-year contract on Saturday.

Sharper, cut by the Green Bay Packers in a cost-cutting move last week, started at free safety the past six seasons and ranks fifth in team Sports history with 36 interceptions. He led the team with four intercenbriefs tions last year and scored three

defensive touchdowns

"Darren is very excited to be going to Minnesota," gent Joel Segal told The Associated Press.

The Packers tried to get Sharper to restructure his deal, but he balked at a pay cut, hoping he could make more on the open market than the approximately \$2 million Green Bay was offering for 2005.

The Vikings were only too happy to have him fall

into their laps.

"He's a great playmaker and has been a nemesis of ours for years," Vikings vice president of football operations Rob Brzezinski said. "He's an outstanding leader and will be a tremendous addition to our

BC player injured during raid on home BOSTON - Boston College guard Jermaine Wat-

son jumped from a second-story window to escape gun-toting masked men who burst into his off-campus apartment, police said.

Watson cut his ear and left hand early Saturday.

He sat out practice that day but coach Al Skinner expected the senior to return to the court Sunday in preparation for the NCAA tournament.

'He said he's OK and he wants to play," Skinner There were no arrests in connection with the raid,

which appeared to stem from a dispute during a party at Watson's apartment.

Els comes out on top again in Middle East

The Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar - Ernie Els won his second straight tournament in the Middle East, rallying to take the Qatar Masters on Sunday by one shot after carding a 7-under 65 in the final round

The third-ranked South African, who finished with a 12-under 276, fired seven birdies to come back from a five-stroke deficit and edge Henrik Stenson of Sweden at the Doha Golf Course. Stenson shot a 71 on Sunday.

Richard Green of Australia and Pierre Fulke of Sweden tied for third at 9 under.

Els also won the Dubai Desert Classic last week

Ogilvy makes up eight strokes, moves into tie for lead

PALM BEACH GARDENS Fla. - Australia's Geoff Ogilvy overcame an eight-shot deficit at the start of play Saturday, shooting an 8-under-par 64 to tie Brett Wetterich for the lead after three rounds in the Honda Classic

Wetterich, bidding for his first PGA Tour victory, began the day alone in the lead but scrambled to a 72 and joined Ogilvy at 12-under 204 Two-time U.S. Open champion

Lee Janzen, seeking his first tour title since 1998, bogeyed No. 18 to fall out of a three-way tie for the lead. A round of 72 left him one stroke off the pace and tied with Pat Perez (67) at 11 under. With the greens firmer than in

the first two rounds and winds still strong, bogeys became more frequent on the long Country Club at Mirasol course

Ogilvy, who won his first title in 108 PGA Tour starts two weeks ago at Tucson, struggled to a 73 in the opening round but began to surge Saturday when he birdied



four of the first six holes. He also birdied Nos. 17 and 18.

"I just kept hitting nice shots and getting good putts," he said. "Maybe six months ago, sneaking right up the leader board deep on Saturday, I might have gotten a bit more nervous than I did. I was nothing but comfortable."

No. 2-ranked Vijay Singh, the lone player entered among the world's top six, shot 70 and was 6 under. Todd Hamilton, the champion last year, shot 72 and was 4

Wetterich and Janzen, playing in the final twosome, swapped the lead three times early. They struggled on the back nine, where most of the holes went into the wind. and slipped back to Ogilvy on the leader board

Fergus leads SBC Classic after 7-under 65 SANTA CLARITA, Calif.

Keith Fergus shot a 7-under 65 to take a one-stroke lead over Mark McNulty after two rounds of the Champions Tour's SBC Classic. The 51-year-old Fergus a

former golf coach at Houston and three-time winner in 14 years on the PGA Tour, had six birdies and a bogey on the Valencia Country Club course for a 7-under 137

McNulty shot a 66 to move to 138, two strokes ahead of Gary McCord (66) and D.A. Weibring (69). Mike Reid was in fifth place at 141 after a second-round 71, and 62-year-old Isao Aoki, the first-round leader, followed an opening 69 with a 73, dropping to

'Happy birthday, coach'

Oklahoma St. gives Sutton a victory over Kansas

By DOUG THEKER The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - The first day of Eddie Sutton's 70th year will produce a coaching

matchup for the ages. Joev Graham scored 25 points. four on free throws in the final 41.4 seconds, as Oklahoma State marked Sutton's 69th birthday with a 78-75 victory over No. 9 Kansas in the Big 12 tournament

In the Big 12 title game on Sunday, it'll be Sutton, with 778 victories, against Texas Tech's Bob Knight, who's won 852 games in a Hall of Fame career.

"I have had a lot of disappointments on my birthday," said Sut-ton, who was serenaded by fans' shouts of, "Happy birthday!"
"Today is not one of those days. I

had a good 69th. The No. 10 Cowboys shot 57 percent in the second half to the 64 percent of Kansas, which got 30 points from Wayne Simien, the

Big 12 player of the year. 'It's tough when the Big 12 tournament is your goal as a freshman and you don't get a chance to cut down the nets." the 6-foot-8 senior said

Graham, who set a Big 12

record this season by hitting 39 foul shots in a row, sank two to give the Cowbovs a three-point ead with 10 seconds left. Then Alex Galindo missed a long

three-nointer at the huzzer "It was a set play," said Aaron Miles, the senior point guard for Kansas (23-6). "I knew they would be on J.R. (Giddens) tight. Galindo got the shot but it didn't

Besides the right to meet Texas Tech in the title game, the teams may have been playing for the right to go to Oklahoma City next week for the opening round of the NCAA tournament. It's the closest first-round site for either

ool and an easy drive for fans. "I would be disappointed if we don't go to Oklahoma City," Sut-ton said. "We have gone East 11

of the last 12 times

Kansas coach Bill Self, an Oklahoma native, was still hopeful. "We should both be there." he said, "But whether or not it plays out that way I don't know because they might nut [Oklahoma] there

too. I don't think they'll put all three of us there." The Cowboys (23-6) missed 12 of their first 14 shots but then got hot and took the lead for good when Daniel Bobik stole the ball on Kansas' end of the court and drove for a layup that made it

JamesOn Curry had 12 points for the Cowboys and John Lucas. Bobik and Ivan McFarlin each had 11

Graham, fouled deliberately with 41.4 seconds left, hit both foul shots for a 75-70 lead. Simien answered with a soft, feathery hook shot and shaved the lead back to three.

Lucas, fouled with 22.8 seconds to go, hit one of two and the Cow-boys led 76-72 until Giddens sank Jayhawks' fifth straight three-pointer.
With 11.8 seconds to go and a

one-point lead, the Cowboys in-bounded the ball to Graham, who was fouled immediately

Texas Tech 69, No. 17 Okla ma 63: Ronald Ross scored 28 points and Jarrius Jackson had 22, both career highs, to help Texas Tech (20-9) reach its first Big 12 tournament final. Terrell Everett led the top-seeded Soon-

ers (24-7) with 15 points. The Red Raiders drew 27 fouls and shot 24-for-33 from the line, compared to Oklahoma's 11-for-19. Ross was 10-for-11 and was perfect until he missed the front end of a two-shot foul in the closing seconds.



Oklahoma State's John Lucas, left, and Jeff Johnson, right, jur for joy after the Cowboys' 78-75 victory over Kansas in a semifinal ne of the Big 12 tournament. OSU faces Texas Tech in the final.

Sparks set a crucial pick that

The Tigers still had time, but

Tack Minor drove wildly into the

lane and lost the ball while trying

to put up the shot. Appropriately

Hayes grabbed it as the horn

sounded to send the Wildcats to

the title game against Florida. "Chuck is the key and the

Nearly everyone in the Georgia Dome crowd of 24,214 was wear-

amazing," LSU coach John Brady

said. "For our team to come in

here and play well in this environ-

ment has to help our team out,

Florida 68. No. 20 Alabama

62: David Lee scored 20 points

and Matt Walsh hit six free

throws in the final 17 seconds as

Florida held on to reach the cham-

pionship game for the second

bama (24-7) with 19 points.

89-73 to Kentucky last year.

Walsh finished with 17 points. Anthony Roberson had 13 and Brewer added 10 for Florida (22-7). Kennedy Winston led Ala-

Florida faced its own history as

well as Kentucky in Sunday's

final. The Gators have never won

the SEC tournament, losing four

times in the final — including

Then again, Florida did beat

Kentucky in the regular-season fi-

nale last weekend, pulling off a

53-52 upset in Gainesville, Fla.

This Kentucky following is

glue." Smith said

ing blue.

even in losing

straight year.

No. 1 Illini make sure to win one for Weber

BY JIM PAUL

CHICAGO - Illinois had its 14-point lead shaved to two with 6 minutes to go. But the top-ranked Illini weren't going to let this game slip away

They wouldn't add a loss to coach Bruce Weber's tragic week-

Illinois (31-1) held Minnesota without a field goal for the final 4:05 on the way to a 64-56 victory Saturday and a trip to the Big Ten tournament championship game for the third straight season. The Illini will face Wisconsin, a 59-56 winner over Iowa.

The Illini also tied a school record for victories, matching the mark set by the 1988-89 Flyin' Illini team that went to Final Four.

'We say we're a family. That's what we emphasized all year, said forward James Augustine, who was the first to put an arm around his coach after the game. 'We're all with him

Weber coached the game less than 24 hours after his mother, 81-year-old Dawn Weber, died at Chicago hospital following emergency heart surgery. He said he never doubted he'd be on

the sideline. "I'm proud of the kids and happy to be back in the champion-ship (game)," Weber said. "I don't want to be the story. The kids have got to be the story

The Illini wore black bands on their jerseys in memory of Dawn Weber, and the emotional drain showed early in what became a somewhat sloppy performance. They committed a season-high 23 turnovers and shot just 36 per-

cent from the field. We were probably feeling a little too emotional," said Luther Head, who led Illinois with 14 points. "We're feeling the same

way he's feeling." The Illini got going midway through the half and took a 14-13 lead on the first of Head's four three-pointers. A 14-0 run turned a 13-8 deficit into a 22-13 lead and Illinois led 30-26 at halftime.

Head's fourth three-pointer put the Illini ahead 49-35 with 12 minutes left. But Illinois missed its next four shots and committed three turnovers, allowing Minnesota to go on a 16-4 run.

Vincent Grier and Aaron Robin. son scored all 16 points.

Deron Williams broke Illinois' drought with a three-pointer, but Robinson hit a three-pointer and Grier dunked to make it 53-51. Roger Powell Jr. converted a

three-point play that pushed the Illini lead back to five, and the Go-phers managed just three free throws down the stretch.

No. 23 Wisconsin 59, Iowa 56: Alando Tucker banked in the biggest shot of Wisconsin's season, hitting a running three-pointer at the buzzer to stun Iowa.

Tucker finished with 20 points on 7-for-12 shooting and Zach Morley added 17 for the Badgers (22-7). Greg Brunner led Iowa (21-11) with 18 points.

Thanks to Hayes, Kentucky in SEC final

BY PAUL NEWBERRY The Associated Press

ATLANTA - Chuck Hayes threw his arms in the air and let out a scream. Tubby Smith pumped his fist furiously as he ran along the sideline. Kentucky usually takes the Southeastern Conference tournament in stride. but the Wildcats couldn't contain themselves. This one was worth celebrat-

Hayes spun into the lane to hit the winning shot with 7.9 seconds left in overtime Saturday, giving the No. 4 Wildcats a 79-78 victor over LSU and a chance to play for another SEC tournament title. "Certainly, it gives us the belief

that we can win close games, said Smith, the Wildcats' coach. Brandon Bass hit a miraculous shot for the Tigers as the buzzer sounded in regulation, forcing overtime with the score tied at 70 LSU built a five-point lead in

the extra period, but it wasn't enough to hold off the Wildcats and the weight of history. Kentucky (25-4) will be going for its third straight SEC tourna-

ment title, its 11th in 14 years and 26th overall. LSU (20-9) has won it only once, way back in 1980.

After its last two championships, the Wildcats didn't even bother cutting down the nets. They may call for the scissors if they beat Florida on Sunday - especially with the way they survived the semifinals

Patrick Sparks hit a crucial three-pointer from the corner to spark the Kentucky comeback, which was helped along when

free throws with 39 seconds left. Kelenna Azubuike, who led the

Wildcats with 19 points, drew a foul and made the first of two free throws to pull Kentucky to 78-77 When the second attempt clanked off the rim, Hayes swooped in to

set up a play for its senior leader, even though he had made only 2 of 9 shots. The Wildcats worked the ball inside to Hayes, who spun around the 300-pound Davis and banked in a shot with his left

"The whole game I had been pausing to see what the defense was going to do," Hayes said. "But that time, I just told myself

gave Hayes room to operate around the massive Davis. "I should have felt the screen, the LSU freshman said. "I should have felt the pick and gotten over

there

grab the offensive rebound. Kentucky called timeout and

to make a quick move, get it up on the rim and give it a chance to go



Georiga Tech victory 'no upset'

Yellow Jackets top Heels, to face Duke in ACC final

WASHINGTON - Rashad McCants followed his North Carolina teammates through the tunnel toward the locker room, wearing a stunned look while biting the front of his white jersey.

The second-ranked Tar Heels had just

lost 78-75 to Georgia Tech in the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament semifinals Saturday after McCants missed a three-pointer that would have forced over-

The junior guard let out a groan and let

the jersey fall from his teeth.
"You know," he said with a sigh, "that was supposed to go in.'

The top-seeded Tar Heels were sup-posed to win their first ACC title since 1998, but that didn't happen, either.

Will Bynum scored a career-high 35 points, and the fifth-seeded Yellow Jackets advanced to the ACC championship game Sunday against Duke with a stunning upset of the league's regular-season champions

Did somebody say upset? "This was no upset out here today. I want to make that point clear," Georgia Tech coach Paul Hewitt said. "These are two great teams, and our team, being a team that I think has accomplished a lot at big moments . . . to be written off was kind

After Bynum capped his magnificent performance by making two foul shots with nine seconds left, McCants' three-point try bounced off the front of the rim and into the waiting arms of Tech's Jarred Jack, who clutched the ball until time expired

The Yellow Jackets celebrated, but with a good measure of restraint.
"It's not a surprise, it's not a shock to

us," Jack said. "We knew we could come in here and compete with any team in our conference, as well as any team in the coun-

Thanks to Bynum, whose 35 points is the most by a Georgia Tech player in the ACC tournament, surpassing the 33 by Mark Price against Virginia in 1983.

"It was big, but I would rather have scored two and won anyway," a teary-eyed Bynum said at the postgame news conference. "As long as we get the win, that's what counts.3

At that point, Hewitt interjected, "It was watching the 35, I'll tell you Georgia Tech, which lost to North Caroli-na by 22 during the regular season, will

play for the league title against fifth-ranked Duke, which beat North Caro-lina State 76-69 in the other semifinal.

J.J. Redick carried the Blue Devils to their seventh consecutive final with a spectacular individual effort, making seven three-pointers and scoring 35 points

A day earlier, Redick missed 11 of his first 12 shots and finished 4-for-17 against Virginia, but his teammates picked up the slack. Their efforts certainly were appreciated in this one, even if Redick needed lit-"Just having the mentality to take the

next shot," he said. "I didn't really dwell on it. I was 4-for-17. I knew eventually my shots would fall." He surpassed Ronnie Maver's previous

school record of 34 points for an ACC tournament game, set in the 1955 semifinals. "J.J.'s performance was one of the best ever." Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski

Redick made the most of a quick reminder from his coach to score at least 30 points

for the fourth time this season. "Coach just talked to me about thinking of whoever is guarding me," Redick said.
"To set my shot up before I ever took it. I

Shelden Williams added 15 points and Daniel Ewing had 14 for the third-seeded Blue Devils, who held on despite missing six free throws in a row down the stretch.



North Carolina's Jawad Williams reacts after the Tar Heels lost to Georgia Tech.

The Wolfpack (19-13) couldn't take advantage. Ilian Evtimov and Engin Atsur each missed threes in the final minute that would have cut the deficit to three, and N.C. State was left hoping its spirited effort during the first two days was enough to secure an at-large bid to the NCAA tourna-

ment.
"I think we proved some people wrong this tournament," guard Cameron Benner-man said. "It feels good to perform well. For me, it's a hard pill to swallow right now, because I thought we could have won. But I'm trying to put it behind me and see what we have for the NCAAs."

Conference tournaments

America Fast

Championship Saturday Northeastern 57 Vermont 80, Nort

Atlantic Coast

Friday
North Carolina 86, Clemson 81
Georgia Tech 73, Virginia Tech 54
N.C. State 81, Wake Forest 65
Duke 76, Virginia 64
Saturday
Georgia Tech 78, North Carolina 75
Duke 76, N.C. State 69
Sunday Sunday Georgia Tech vs. Duke

Atlantic 10

Friday
Saint Joseph's 73, Xavier 68
George Washington 77, Temple 58
Championship
Saturday
George Washington 76, Saint Joseph's 67

Big East Friday
West Virginia 78, Villanova 76
Syracuse 67, Connecticut 63
Championship
Saturday
Syracuse 68, West Virginia 59

Big Ten

Friday Illinois 68, Northwestern 51 Minnesota 71, Indiana 55 Iowa 71, Michigan State 69 Wisconsin 60, Ohio State 49 Saturday

Illinois vs. Wiscon Big 12

Priday
Oklahoma 83, Missouri 79
Texas Tech 64, Iowa State 56
Kansas 80, Kansas State 67
Oklahoma State 87, Colorado

Oklahoma State 87, Colorado 85 Saturday Texas Tech 69, Oklahoma 63 Oklahoma State 78, Kansas 75 Sunday Texas Tech vs. Oklahoma State

Big West

Friday Pacific 63, Cal State Northridge 61 Utah State 84, Cal State Fullerton 77
Championship
Saturday
Utah State 65, Pacific 52

Conference USA

Friday
Louisville 74, Alabama-Birmingham 64
Memphis 81, South Florida 68
Championship
Saturday
11-75 Memphis 74

Mid-American

Ohio 63, Miami (Ohio) 56 Buffalo 75, Western Michig Championsh Saturday Ohio 80 Ruffalo 79 (OT

Mid-Eastern Athletic

Priday
Delaware St. 61, South Carolina St. 48
Hampton 62, Coppin State 50
Championship
Saturday
Delaware State 55, Hampton 53

Mountain West Utah 73, UNLV 67 New Mexico 77, San Diego State 67 Championshin

Saturday New Mexico 60, Utah 56

Pacific-10

Friday Arizona 90, Oregon State 59 Washington 66, Stanford 63 Championship Saturday Washington 81, Arizona 72

Patriot League

Championship Friday Bucknell 61, Holy Cross

Southeastern

Alabama 69, Mississippi 52 Florida 80, Mississippi 52 Florida 80, Mississippi State 64 Kentucky 76, Tennessee 62 LSU 89, Auburn 58 Saturday Florida 68, Alabama 62 Kentucky 79, LSU 78, OT Sunday Florida vs. Kentucky

Southland Championship Sunday

Southwestern Athletic

Friday
Alabama State 54, Southern U, 50
Alabama A&M 74, Jackson State 5
Championship
Sunday
Alabama State vs. Alabama A&M

Western Athletic

Friday Texas-El Paso 85, Rice 77 Saturday Texas-El Paso 91, Boise State 78

New Mexico no longer on bubble

DENVER - The selection committee can stop worrying about New Mexico, A lot of NCAA tour. nament teams out there probably ought to start, though.

The Lobos made their invitation to the NCAAs a formality Saturday night, getting 28 points, 11 rebounds and four straight clutch free throws from Danny Granger in a 60-56 victory over No. 15 Utah in the Mountain West Conference championship game.

Playing as though their season was at stake - even though it probably wasn't by this point the second-seeded Lobos (26-6) iumped on Andrew Bogut and the top-seeded Utes (27-5) early and kept them an arm's distance away most of the way.

And when Bogut (19 points, 16 rebounds) triggered a 9-2 run that gave the Utes a 49-48 lead with 3:35 left - their first since midway through the first half — New Mexico responded. Alfred Neale slammed home a miss for a 50-49 lead David Chiotti made a move that felled Bogut and led to an easy layup.

After two Utah free throws made it 52-51, Granger made two huge baskets, forcing a shot over a defender under the basket for one score, then dribbling to the baseline and shaking loose from defender Marc Jackson for an open 15 footer that he buried for a 56-51 lead.

Bogut responded with a three-pointer with 21 seconds left, but Granger countered by sinking four free throws down the stretch to keep it a two-possession

When the buzzer sounded, center Bambale Osby sprinted off the bench and did two handsprings cheerleader style - then the Lobos went into the crowd to cele-

Conference finals

brate along with the thousands who followed them up Interstate 25 to watch them earn their first NCAA bid since 1999. The win capped off a day that began when New Mexico heat Iltah for the women's championship.

For the men, it was the ninth straight win and 12th in the past 13 Two of those wins have come against Utah, the league's regular-season champ, which will al-most certainly earn an at-large bid for its fourth straight trip to

But the Mountain West's bigest threat could very well be the Lobos, who won their first conference tourney since 1996 — when Dave Bliss was coach and they played in the Western Athletic Conference.

They were on the tournament bubble because of their low RPI rating (85th) and ultra-weak strength of schedule (298), but have more than put to rest all those misgivings over a torrid stretch that began with a win over UNLV at The Pit on Jan. 29.

Granger scored 18 of his points in the first half and well out-played Bogut, who was "held" to just 19 points by a defense that fronted him with Chiotti, then brought help from the back-side

Despite that success, the Lobos couldn't build their lead into double digits and when the Utes shut down Granger through most of the second half, it was clear this one would come down to the wire.

It did - but it was Granger, not Bogut, who wound up holding the trophy and being named the tour-nament's Most Valuable Player. The Lobos, who were serenaded by chants of "Never Rated!" from Utah fans in the pregame warmups, stayed around to cut down the nets. And by then, it was Lobo fans doing the chanting shouting "Over "NIT!" to the Utes. "Overrated!"

Western Athletic Conference

UTEP 91, Boise St. 78: At Reno, Nev., Filiberto Rivera scored 17 of his 32 points in the last 6 minutes to help Texas El-Paso hold off Boise State.

John Tofi added 21 points, Omar Thomas had 15 and Giovanni St. Amant 13 for the second-seeded Miners (27-7), who shot 67 percent from the field in the second half to secure an automatic bid to the NCAA tourna-

Coby Karl had 24 points for the eighth-seeded Broncos (16-18).

Atlantic 10

George Washington 76, Saint Joseph's 67: At Cincinnati — T.J. Thompson led a late 12-point run to help George Washington (22-7) win its first Atlantic 10 tournament title - and first NCAA

berth in six years.
Pat Carroll had 25 points for Saint Joseph's (19-11).

Mid-American

Ohio 80. Buffalo 79. OT: CLEVELAND — Freshman Leon Williams made a layup in the final second as Ohio down by 19 points in the second half, rallied to win the Mid-American Conference championship for its first NCAA berth since 1994.

Williams finished with a ca-reer-high 29 points and 15 re-bounds and was selected the named the tournament MVP. Jeremy Fears added 21 points for the

Bobcats (21-10). Turner Battle had 22 points for

the Bulls (22-9).

Psst! Huskies win

Whispering campaign leads to shouts of joy as Washington tops Arizona for Pac-10 title

44 You've got to keep

telling the other guus.

'He doesn't want to

pass you the ball,' and

that's what we did. A

couple whispers ... it

kills the other team's

confidence.

Nate Robinson

Washington guard

BY BETH HARRIS

The Associated Pres

LOS ANGELES - Little Nate Robinson and 14th-ranked Washington kept whispering to Salim Stoudamire's Arizona teammates.

At the buzzer, the Huskies were the ones shouting with joy at winning the school's first

Pac-10 tournament title. Robinson scored six points - his only points of the second half - in the final 67 sec. onds as Washington unset of No. 8 Arizona 81-72 on Saturday despite a brilliant 37-point performance by the Wildcats' Damon

Stoudamire. Robinson defended Stoudamire and compared it to playing with-out his hands. "You just got to run around and chase him." he said. "We said, 'He's going to score, but we can't let the role players get their 15 (points) and 8 (rebounds).

"You've got to keep telling the other guys,
'He doesn't want to nass you the ball,' and that's what we did," said Robinson, a sly smile on his face. "A couple whis-pers ... it kills the other team's confidence

Robinson joked that he told Stoudamire he'd have to score 100 to beat the Huskies Asked if he really said that, Robinson replied,

"No because he would have gone for 50 The Huskies (27-5) closed the game with a 19-4 run to earn the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA tournament, although Arizo

na (27-6) is assured of a berth, too Washington coach Lorenzo Romar com

pared the game to a prize fight. "One punch after another," he said. "Arizona brings out the best in us because for so long

they have been the best.' The Huskies won three tournament games by a combined 17 points; Arizona won its first two by a total of 56 points.

"No question the team that played the hardest won the ballgame," Arizona coach Lute Olson said. "They're one of the few teams that can send five people to the offensive boards and are quick enough to recover defensively." Robinson and Tre Simmons led the Huskies with 18 points each and Jamaal Williams added 16

Stoudamire, who finished two off the tournament scoring record set by UCLA's Reggie Miller, hit seven three-pointers and the teams

combined for 17 three-pointers — both tournament records. He was selected tourney MVP

But he couldn't help the Wildcats to a record fifth tourney title. They are 4-1 in championship games.

"I wanted to be the guy that everyone looks up to, but at the same time, we got to stay within the team concept,' otoudamire said. "We got away from that." The Hueld

six straight and tied it at 70 on two free throws by Bobby Jones after Chris

Rodgers was called for holding with 3:34 remaining Arizona's Channing Frye scored inside before Will Conroy hit his fourth three-pointer of the half for a 73-72 lead with 2:15 to go.

Frye finished with 14 points.

With Frye and Stoudamire tightly guarded. Hassan Adams missed a jumper from the top

of the key.
The 5-foot-9 Robinson fearlessly drove inside and scored to put the Huskies ahead 75-72 with 1:07 left.

"Nate always comes up big when the game is on the line." Olson said. Stoudamire tripped and fell in front of Arizo-



na's bench, losing the ball out of bounds with 46 seconds left.

Asked if he was tripped, Stoudamire said, "I think so, but obviously the ref didn't. You can't let referees decide the game. We

believed Stoudamire was tripped.

Then Stoudamire fouled Robinson, who made both free throws, for a 77-72 lead with 34 seconds left. Simmons made two free throws and Stoudamire's jumper bounced off the rim with 26 seconds to go

Robinson stole the ball at midcourt, was fouled and made both free throws with 19 sec-

Arizona coach Lute Olson watched in disbelief as his team squandered a six-point lead in the Pac-10 title game. Washington won 81-72.

should've been ahead by a lot more

Olson, with a smile on his face, said he also

"But who am I to question that call? That one call didn't cost us the game," Olson said.

Syracuse ends W.Virginia's Big East run

By JIM O'CONNELL

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — There was no wild celebrating. The nets are still on the rims at Madison Square Garden

No. 16 Syracuse won its first Big East tournament championship since 1992 on Saturday night with a 68-59 victory over West Virginia. Yet the postgame celebration wasn't far off that for a quality regular-season win.

"This was a great tournament win for us, especially for our se niors; to be able to win this thing was a tremendous accomplishment," Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim said. "I'm real happy for

Then why no celebration?

"I don't know," he said "Maybe it's unfortunate but my mind-set has probably changed

— and maybe it shouldn't, but it has. In my mind-set, the only thing that matters is next week."

Hakim Warrick had 20 points and 13 rebounds for the Orange, who should be seeded from third to fifth in the NCAA tournament that starts next week. Warrick. the conference player of the year, was selected the tournament

The last time Warrick and his teammates cut down the nets was in New Orleans after the 2003 NCAA championship game.

"That's something you want to save for the Final Four, a national championship," he said. "This is a really big thing, a big win, but we definitely want to be cutting down the nets in St. Louis.

The Big East tournament title was something Warrick wanted once he decided to return for his senior season.

'When I came back I thought of this," he said. "Big East player of the year, Big East tournament champion and MVP. I couldn't end my career any better, couldn't have scripted it any better.

third-seeded Orange (27-6) won their fourth Big East tournament title in their 12th championship game appearance.

The loss ended a history-mak-

the first No. 8 seed to reach the championship game. No team had ever won four games to take the title and the Mountaineers fell one game short of winning their first conference championship since winning the Atlantic 10 in

West Virginia had never gotten past the quarterfinal round before this season. The Mountaineers got past the quarterfinals this time by beating top-seeded Boston College.

"I've been fortunate enough to have similar times in my life but not four times on this stage," West Virginia coach John Beilein said. "But these kids are going to remember this forever.'

Syracuse again used its 2-3 zone defense and Warrick's inside presence to take a big lead. The Orange dominated sec-ond-seeded Connecticut in the semifinals that way but just like that game they also let a big lead

"Our defense both nights was outstanding." Boeheim said. "I just thought defensively we were really good and offensively we did the things we had to."

Syracuse led Connecticut by 21 points with 12:47 to play and wound up winning 67-63. The Orange opened the second half Saturday night with a 10-2 run to take a 51-33 lead over the Mountaineers with 16:12 left.

But West Virginia finally startea niting three-pointers — the Mountaineers were 35-for-74 the first three games — and the lead was down 55-50 with 8:20 left.

Josh Pace tipped in a miss by Warrick with 4:57 left to make it 59-50 - the first Syracuse points not scored by Warrick in 12 minutes — and West Virginia didn't get closer than eight points the rest of the way.

Gerry McNamara added 16 points and Pace had 13 for the Orange, whose other titles came in 1981 and 1988.

Tyrone Sally had 13 points for the Mountaineers, Mike Gansey who made two free throws with 0.2 seconds left to beat Villanova in the semifinals, and Joe Herber each added 11 points.

Aggies end Pacific's 22-game win streak

BY ANDREW DALTON The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Utah State left nothing to chance this year. Left out of the NCAA tournament last season, the Aggies earned the Big West's automatic bid Saturday night with a 65-52 victory over No. 18 Pacific in the championship game of the conference tournament.
Utah State (24-7) ended Pacif-

ic's 22-game winning streak to se-cure its fifth NCAA tournament berth - and its fifth Big West

championship — in eight years.

"All I know is we're in," Aggies
coach Stew Morrill said. "That's
all that matters right now."

Big West freshman of the year Jaycee Carroll led Utah State with 22 points, shooting 9-for-19 from the field, and Spencer Nelson added 16 points.

Top-seeded Pacific (26-3) entered with the nation's longest winning streak and had won 34 straight against Big West teams.

Tigers' lowest-scoring game of the season featured 101/2-minute spell without a field goal in the second half.

Utah State went on a 19-2 run midway through the second half, canned by Carroll's short jumper that put the Aggies up 49-37 with 7:32 to play

"Coach always says the advantage goes to the aggressor," Carroll said. "I came out tonight and tried to get them back on their heels

"We had no answer for Carroll," Pacific coach Bob Thomason said. "They deserved to win. The Tigers' leading scorer, Guillaume Yango, scored just six

points and Big West player of the year David Doubley was held to The Aggies, who led by as many as 16 in the final minutes, lost twice to Pacific during the

regular season, once in overtime and the other time by one point after blowing a six-point lead in the final 30 seconds. "We wanted a chance to play

them again and we got our wish,' Nelson said. "We took care of business 1

Pacific led 29-28 at halftime and scored the first four points of the second half. Carroll made a three-pointer to pull Utah State to 35-33, and the Aggies took the lead at 36-35 with a short jumper with 15:38 to go.

The Tigers had a scoreless stretch in the first half nearly as long as their second-half drought. After Jasko Korajkic made a three-pointer to start the game, the Tigers went more than 9 minutes without a basket.

The Tigers were expected to get an at-large tournament bid even with a loss Saturday.

"We deserve to go," Thomason said. "No team in the country is 13-1 on the road. Why wouldn't they want us in there?"

SPORTS



Edwards' flat tire helps Martin to 47th series victory, Page 28

McGwire linked to '90s probe

Report: He was not target of federal steroid investigation

NEW YORK - Mark McGwire's name was mentioned several times during a federal steroids investigation in the early 1990s but he was not the target of the probe nor was any evidence collected against him, the Daily News reported Sunday

McGwire. Jose Canseco and five current players along with four baseball executives were subpoenaed to testify at a congressional hearing on steroids Thursday. The commissioner's office has said it will fight the subpoenas. Canseco says he will testify and has asked for immunity so he can answer all questions; McGwire and some of the other players haven't said whether they'll show in Washington.

Two dealers caught in the federal investi-

man named Curtis Wenzlaff gave Canseco and McGwire illegal anabolic steroids.

A spokesman for McGwire, Marc Altieri, told the newspaper the former player does

not remember meeting Wenzlaff. "We're not going to comment on anything at this time," Altieri said, "but we be-lieve one should consider the sources of

such allegations. Canseco said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" he met Wenzlaff in the 1980s and worked out with him but did not buy ste-

roids from him When asked by the newspaper, Wenzlaff declined to comment about McGwire but

said he did give Canseco steroids. "I supplied a bunch of players, but I'm

zlaff told the Daily News. "Jose's different

because he opened the door with his book." Canseco said in his recently published autobiography that he, McGwire and Giambi shot steroids together in a bathroom

stall at Oakland Coliseum. McGwire and Giambi have denied Canseco's charges.

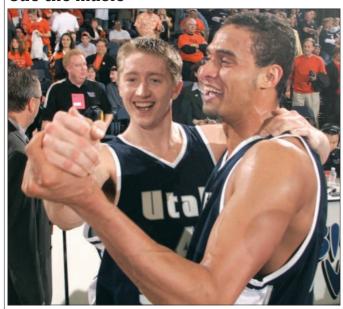
Canseco said Sunday he thinks a congressional investigation of steroid use in baseball is a good idea and more people should be called to testify.

"If Major League Baseball wanted in the past to completely just sever steroids from Major League Baseball, they would have done it. Obviously, there was so much money to be made," Canseco told "This



Evidence wasn't collected against Mark McGwire during a federal probe, but his name reportedly was mentioned repeatedly.

Cue the music





At left, Utah State's Nate Harris (left) and Cass Matheus dance after the Aggies earned an automatic NCAA tournament berth by beating No. 18 Pacific in the final of the Big West tournament in Anaheim. Calif. Above, New Mexico coach Ritchie McKay (front) jumps in front of his players for a team photograph after the Lobos beat Utah 60-56 to claim the Mountain West Conference tournament title in Denver. See conference tournament coverage

Anthony, Bryant keep their teams even in pursuit of playoffs Page 27